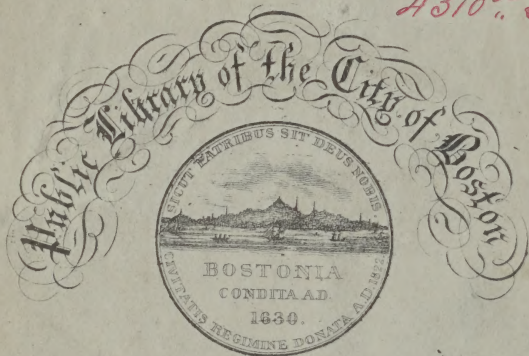




PROPERTY OF THE

4310^o 51.



Added Sept. 29, 1865. No. 70427





Crosby & N.

4310^c 57

THE LAWS OF HUMAN PROGRESS AND MODERN REFORMS.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

MERCANTILE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

OF THE

City of New-York.

BY

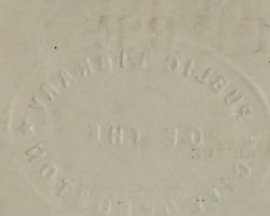
REV. ORVILLE DEWEY.

NEW-YORK:

C. S. FRANCIS & COMPANY, 252 BROADWAY.

BOSTON: CROSBY & NICHOLS.

M.DCCC.LII.



MERCANTILE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

1881

LIBRARY OF THE

NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

THE LAWS OF HUMAN PROGRESS AND MODERN REFORMS.

A LECTURE

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

70427
MERCANTILE LIBRARY ASSOCIATION

OF THE

City of New-York.

BY

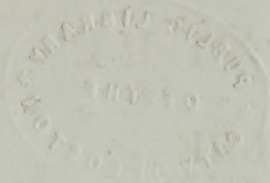
REV. ORVILLE DEWEY.

NEW-YORK:

C. S. FRANCIS & COMPANY, 252 BROADWAY.

BOSTON: CROSBY & NICHOLS.

M.DCCC.LII.



JOHN F. TROW, PRINTER,
49 Ann-st., New-York.

LECTURE

ON THE LAWS OF HUMAN PROGRESS AND MODERN REFORM.

A discourse was delivered and printed a year or two since, by a distinguished citizen, "on the Law of human progress." The principal object of that discourse, or oration, was to show that progress is a law of humanity. The history of this great idea, the certainty of its realization, and the folly of any conservatism that resists it, were the matters mainly treated of. The *Laws* of human progress; the necessary conditions on which it depends; the forces and the limitations to which all progress, all reform, is subject—this is a different theme; and it is the one to which I propose to invite your attention this evening. I hardly know what subject that I could name, deserves at the present time more attention, or gains less. Or gains less, I say. Declamation enough we have about progress, but very little of the deeper thought that comes from a profound acquaintance with human nature and life and history. We want a *philosophy* of progress, and among all our philosophies, do not seem to have it. I do not now remember a book with this title, the Philosophy of Progress, or the Philosophy of Reforms. If there be none, the want of it is somewhat significant. But the subject equally deserves atten-

tion. For the one matter of controversy, that is now rife and raging through the whole sphere of civilization—from the farthest bounds of Europe, from the Bosphorus and the Black Sea, across the whole world, to the coasts of Oregon and California, is *progress*. Restraint and freedom; legitimacy and liberty; Monarchy and Republic; aristocracy and radicalism; conservatism and ultraism—communism, socialism, reform, penal code, private right—the people's rights, the laborer's rights, women's rights, every body's rights, and every body's wrongs—and how to carry on society by some great stride to the righting of all wrongs—these are subjects with which the whole world is embroiled. Indications of every sort, conflicts, controversies, conventions, revolutions, battles, one or other, attest every where the presence of this disturbing element—the desire of progress, of change, of something better, or of what is thought to be better. But it seems to me quite remarkable how rare it is to meet with any book, any pamphlet, any manifesto, any string of resolutions, or any speech in Convention, that goes back to original principles—that goes down to the very grounds of the questions thus agitated, or in other words, to the laws of reason and wisdom which are entitled to settle them. I say the questions; for always there is a question. Ought this to be, or not? Ought nations to choose their own rulers, and ought the suffrage to be universal? Ought the present system of property and the relations of capital and labor to continue, or to be broken up, and society to be reorganized and placed upon a new basis? Ought standing armies to be maintained, or ought they to be disbanded, and nations, on no account nor occasion, to contend with deadly weapons? Ought we to

give up our old national policy, and resort to armed intervention in foreign quarrels? Ought capital punishment to be abolished? Ought the slaves to be immediately emancipated? Ought women to have the same education, business, political franchises and public offices, as men?

The common method of discussing these, and many other questions of a like nature, is to espouse one side or the other, and to see what can be said for it. Most writers and speakers are found in the ranks of conservatives or ultraists, and their arguments, while they delight their own party, tend very little to convince the other—perhaps are not even read by the other. Would it not be a better method of proceeding to inquire for the *principles* by which all such questions are to be decided? Might not such a method lead to the discovery, that there is commonly something right on *both* sides, and in some cases that there is a *medium*, which is nearer to the truth than either?

I do not say that any principles can be laid down by which the matters in question shall be immediately or definitely settled. The interests and duties of a multitude of human beings are involved; and such subjects do not admit of any very prompt and clear decision. But certainly the right principles will have some tendency, and may yield some help, to lead us to the right conclusion. Let us then see if we can ascertain what are the Laws, or some of the Laws of Progress; and I pray your attention to this brief discussion, if it shall appear somewhat abstract; for we shall soon have occasion to to apply it to matters that are practical enough. Progress, let it be observed, is of two kinds—inward and outward; of the mind and of institutions. Most questions arise with regard to the latter; and I

might confine my view to this. But as they stand closely related—related in fact as cause and effect; as all outward comes from inward movement, and is, in fact, its expression, its symbol, I shall consider them together—discriminating them only as I shall find occasion.

The laws of progress then, come under three general heads: the nature of man; his condition, *i. e.*, in the material world; and his social, including his political relations.

The first law of progress, therefore, is moral freedom. Call this man's birthright or not—*say* or *deny* that all men are born to be free,—one thing is certain, there cannot be one step in human progress without this condition. And it is only from what is inevitably left of freedom to the very serf and slave, that he makes any progress. More in fact is left, than we always consider, or than our current language always admits. Free will, free thought, may be in many ways injuriously checked; but it cannot be extinguished in any human being; if it were, it would be, not slavery, but death to him as a man. And as far as any institution, any authority, any religion, any government crushes down this freedom, it stops the growth of men and communities.

The second law of progress is individual responsibility. The order of nature and providence is, that every man shall answer for himself. The system of the world is a system of rewards and punishments. They are indispensable stimulants to action. Any institution then, monastic, communist, or co-operative, that relieves a man of self-care and personal responsibility, will be fatal to human progress, or in other words, so far as it goes that way, it will have that effect.

A third law of progress is, that it is experimental; wrought out in the mind and experience of men. The truth is, men will not learn in any other way; perhaps they cannot. What is verified in ourselves, is true; all else is dogma, phraseology, not faith. You cannot theorize, legislate, or organize men into an improved condition; they must experiment themselves into it. I do not mean by this, to object to theories, plans, projects; but their proper office is to lead men to try them, and nothing but trial can prove them to be true. And if they go very far beyond the minds they propose to benefit—taking them *out* of the range of fair experiment; if any State organizations or constitutions do this, they must be pronounced visionary, unsafe, and impracticable. With regard to political organizations, our South American States found it to be so; republics could not flourish on their soil; and in the extending popularity of this kind of government, their example of failure is not likely to be the last. It is just as if you should take savages from their rude and filthy huts, and place them in a model village, laid out, arranged, and furnished by all the arts of civilization; they could neither use nor enjoy it, but would throw all back into disorder, and disarray, and filth; they would turn all the fine cottages and villas into huts and cabins again, from which they must again build up and work up their own way anew.

And, therefore, I confidently lay down as a fourth law of progress, that it must be gradual. Little by little does man learn; slowly does he advance; and there is no other way. I need not enlarge upon this point; the matter speaks plainly enough for itself: experimenting is, from the very nature of the case, slow: the onward steps of men are by centuries. It is a law,

wisely ordained too; it makes progress thorough; it engages in it the energy and fidelity of men; it makes the advancing steps safe and sure. It makes the result cost something, and therefore makes it worth something. If you were carried to the top of a mountain, by a foreign force, in a moment's flight, you would not value the elevation as you do when you have yourself toiled slowly up the ascent. You *do* not value intuitions, nature's work in you, as you do conclusions, of your own. They are worth as much, perhaps more; but God makes his gifts more precious to us, by engaging our powers to grasp and to realize them.

But a fifth law of progress is, that it is subject to conditions imposed upon it, by material nature. We hear much of the conquest of nature, of its subjection, to human use and convenience, to human progress especially. But I suppose there is a limit somewhere. I do not know whether men will yet fly or sail through the air; but I suppose they will never fly or sail to the moon. No aeronaut expects to ascend to Saturn. But to be quite serious; would you not say as you look at the nobler part of man—and would you not feel as if you were asserting a kind of self-evident truth, when you say, that he has a right to the development and culture of his mind—a right to be educated—a right to be taught—instructed—cultivated? I think we often hear something like this. And some truth there is in the assertion; but it is not absolute, in the way that it is commonly put; it is not one of the self-evident, universal, unlimited propositions. It is controlled to a certain extent by other considerations—by obstacles, that is to say, in material nature. The mass of mankind must *labor*; and must spend the most of their lives in that way. Their right to mental

culture, at least in the ordinary sense of the phrase, is subject to that condition. Perhaps they get a better training than schoolmen would give them. I believe they do. I devoutly believe in the lessons of the great taskmaster. I believe, that oftentimes men who labor in the field and the workshop—who turn their hands to this and that—who address their faculties to a thousand varying exigencies—who come into instant contact with men and things, and learn patience, perseverance, and self-denial, and in whose hand, and frame, and mind, is the might and mystery of *work*, are wiser than many who read books all the day long. Nay, there are those, to whom the printed page is for ever a sealed book, who yet are wiser, and better, and happier than the proudest philosopher that looks down upon them. Certainly I do not disparage any good learning. But it is well that we should understand—we who, as a nation, are wont to value reading, writing, and arithmethic, above all knowledge; that there is another kind of training in the great school of life; that it sets limits to book-learning, and is often better.

The last law of progress which I shall mention, springs from the *social* relation; it is the community, or rather the common dependency, of all social and political interests; it is, what is often called of late from the French writers, the solidarity of the human race; and I think there was need of the word. It comes from the Latin, *sōlidus*, solid, and means that every man's interest and culture are bound in with the solid mass of all human welfare. We are all partners in a firm; and such a firm that no man living can get out of it. *My* comfort, *my* ease, facility, opportunity to cultivate my own estate or mind, cannot stand apart and alone. I may say, "What to me are the poor, the beggars,

the drunken?" But the next I know, the poor tax me, the beggar robs me, the drunken mars my plate, breaks my pitcher, or burns my house. And in higher relations—the general state of literature and science, the general state of religion—Shakspeare's Drama, Sir Walter's Fiction, Cuvier's Physiology, Augustine's, Pelagius' Creed—affect my mind, my learning, my progress. Alternately I am giver and receiver. However humble I may be, yet not a thought of mine lights upon the earth, even in casual talk, but it sinks into its bosom and brings forth fruit, or rises and wanders in the air; and like "bread cast upon the waters, returns to me after many days." I live upon the common food of human thought. I breathe through the pores of the world. I am a part of the world—bound up with it in this all-comprehending solidarity of interests.

The same thing is true in our political relations; and it deserves to be thoughtfully considered; and especially in these days—yet more especially among ourselves. A State implies a compact among its members. They agree together to do certain things, and to abstain from certain things. Deny, repudiate, nullify this compact, and the State ceases to exist. The compact, I say, is restrictive as well as permissive. The parties to it consent that their freedom, their free action, their pursuit of any object, however they may think it otherwise right or advantageous, shall be subject to this restriction. They agree to give up a portion of their natural rights, in order to create a political community. Thus, if a man lived alone upon an island—and which was his if you please by right of discovery—he might hunt, fish, plant, gather, turn the course of waters, do any thing he pleased; and these would be

natural rights. But suppose that a thousand adventurers arrive at the island, and he agrees with them to form a government, to divide the land, and to assign to each one a portion, as property; then he gives up, so far, his natural rights. And so it is with all his relations to the State. He is bound in with it to certain conditions. And if he assumes the right to violate these conditions, that assumption is revolutionary, destructive, fatal. He may tell us of a progress of thought in certain respects—of rights that override the law—of the great rights of *humanity* (and it is a solemn word, to which I am bound to listen—it may be the word struggling in my own deepest heart and I will more particularly consider it soon); nevertheless, it is certain that so far as any man listens to such pleas for breaking the compact, he destroys the State. For the State—unless it be a despotism of some Louis Fourteenth, of which he is the sum and the substance—lives, and has its being, only in a constitutional compact.

I have thus attempted briefly to expound six laws of human progress—to show that it implies moral freedom and individual responsibility; that it must be experimental and gradual; and that it is subject to conditions imposed upon it by material nature and the general state of society. To sum up the matter in fewer words; nothing that fights against the laws of human nature, of material nature, and of the common dependency of man on man, can succeed.

It may be thought a great omission, that I have not mentioned the greatest happiness of the greatest number as a law. But except in so far as this is involved in the principle of solidarity, it is the *end*, and indeed the very nature of progress, rather than the law. Mon-

tesquieu, in the third book of the *Spirit of Laws*, makes an acute distinction between the *nature* of a government and the *principle* of a government: the former being that by which it is what it is; the latter, that upon which it acts. Now, the progress of humanity, or of a people, *is* its growing wiser, better, happier. Human rights, duties, and interests will of course be more and more recognized in such a progress. These, then, it was not my business to insist upon; for I proposed to point out the conditions or principles upon which this progress is to be made.

Let us now attempt to bring these principles to some application. It cannot always be very definite, perhaps; but it may be some guide for us, in the questions that naturally arise. What it is just and right to propose in regard to progress—what reasonable to expect; what is fit to be undertaken—what possible to be done; and how it is to be done—these certainly are matters of great practical importance.

In regard, first and generally, to the inquiry, *how* it is to be done—*how* progress is to be made—I confess that I am constrained by my convictions to call in question, I had almost said, the whole spirit of modern reform; and indeed of every other, but the Christian Reform. Let us consider it. Here is a progress to be made. That is, there is to be reform. Better things are to *be*, and to be *done*; and “better still in infinite progression.” Every body admits it. Especially, at the *present day*, every body admits it. The idea of progress has taken fast hold of the modern ages, as it never did of the ancient. And, moreover, this progress, while certain, must be gradual, experimental, and blended in strict solidarity with a great mass of interests. Why then must reforms be taken up with vio-

lence? Why degenerate into partisan strifes? Why do we not calmly engage in them as if they belonged to the order of the world? It is said, I know, that all revolutions, all great changes for the better, have been violent, and probably must be so. I do not see the necessity, even in political revolutions. The Reform Bill, in England, was not a violent revolution; and most constitutional changes in England, unlike those in France, have been peaceful. But revolutions in *opinion*, have their place *exclusively* in the *mind*. They are to be carried on by writing books, not fighting battles; by the agency of clear thoughts, not furious passions. Nay, they are hindered by furious passions. The object is to change the mind of a people, to bring it over to another opinion. But violence inflames, distorts, prejudices the public mind; sets it *against* the proposed change. Violence is the atmosphere, not of truth, but of error, of falsehood, of perverted seeing. A quiet, deep-felt, earnest appeal, like the calm and penetrating sunlight, would do more to strip off the close-casing garments of old error, than all this wind of excitement.

“Fine talk!” the reformer may say,—“here is the whole mass, the whole conservatism of the world opposed to me.” Is it so? I answer: that seems to me an argument for modesty. Why, I say again, therefore, this *arrogance* of reform—this outrageous assurance—this browbeating confidence, like to which there is nothing to be seen, arrayed on the side of the whole world’s opinion? A man who stands up before the whole world, and says, “Give up your opinion to me, and take mine,” it seems to me should, at the least, be modest. He may be zealous, he may be deeply in earnest; nay, he may be *right*; but it appears to me

at the same time, that modesty becomes him, and can do neither him nor his cause any harm.

Be this as it may—and it may be a matter of taste if you please—but certainly nothing can justify the uncharitableness, the abuse, the positive detraction that mars, in so many cases, the reform movements of the day. Evil *speaking*, *false* speaking, are bad things, let the cause they espouse be ever so good. I speak plainly. It is no business nor pretension of mine to *patronize* reforms or reformers. But I certainly feel a strong interest in many of the reforms of the day. And there is not one of them, in which I do not see some good ends. And *Reformers* are the last men that I would have disappear from the world. But I demand of them, and I entreat them too, as men engaged in the noble cause of progress, that they act nobly, and speak nobly—with calmness, modesty and candor, howsoever it be with courage and earnestness. It is a pity that the cause of progress, the cause of reform in other words, which is the grand interest of the collective race of mankind—which is the very destiny of the world—should be brought under such heavy misconstruction as now lies upon it, through the faults of its most prominent advocates. Not, indeed, that the whole army of progress is to be confounded with the vanguard; but the vanguard naturally makes the first and strongest impression.

The truth is, that public sentiment, in large and influential quarters, is alienated from what is good in the reform movements of the day, by the evil that is in them. The repugnance for the most part is cold and silent, and may be the less suspected. *Mine* might be so, but I choose to speak out; because I take an interest in these movements—in and for them. I say plain-

ly, then, physician, heal thyself; reformer, reform thyself; do not ask me to take your medicine unless it works better with you; do not ask me to go with you till you make me better like your company. If the Christian religion itself had been advocated as some of your reforms are, I should hardly have been won to it, and certainly not to its Apostles. See how nobly, candidly, charitably, tenderly, ay, and modestly, Paul pleaded for *that* Reform, and how anxious he was to keep the bond of its discipleship strong and unbroken. And he did so. But what sort of spectacle do our modern reformers present? quarrelling among themselves—splitting into parties, who assail one another as bitterly as they ever did any body else.

There *must* be something wrong here; and it is high time to ask if there cannot be something better, a new ideal of the thing, a *reform of reform* effected. It is not enough to say of any men, that they have done some good to the cause they have espoused. The true question is, have they done the most in their power, and the least evil that the case admitted? It is upon this question that the severe and enlightened judgment of after times will pronounce its verdict.

But let us proceed to consider some of the particular changes or reforms proposed. They invite our consideration. They ask in fact for our co-operation. They are really, many of them, matters of great interest. And it is not unreasonable, as it seems to me, that one should wish to say what he thinks of them, though his opinion may be of no great importance. But it is the aggregate of individual and mostly unimportant opinions, that makes up the great mass of *public* opinion; and *that* is of no little importance. Whatever, there-

fore, one can do to clear up his own judgment, or to help that of others, I suppose he may fitly do.

Most of those who take the trouble to address the public on what are called Reform measures, commonly do so from a strong interest, either *for* or *against* them. They are either conservatives or ultra-ists—either against, altogether against any proposed change, or for it to the utmost extent. Now I shall frankly tell you that I belong to neither party. It is a very unpopular profession, I know; but I ask nobody's pity, and I deprecate no man's displeasure. I believe that I am here in the company of many liberal minds, who will not construe me unjustly; and I shall say nothing of the delicacy of my position—nothing of being between two fires—nothing of the unlikelihood of pleasing any body. I am not speaking, I frankly say, to please *any body*, I am speaking—just to please myself—to speak, at any rate, my own mind. Let me have, for this evening, the liberty to do this; and call it a very strange mind, if you will. I really think there may be some advantage in it. I really think that the grandest Reform Society that could be got up in this country, would be a society of people to speak their own mind, and please nobody. Our whirling eccentricities want that balance wheel. I can tell the moderatism—(if I may make the word)—the moderatism of this country, that it is asleep and dumb, just where, of all countries in the world, its voice is most needed to be heard. I say, then, for myself and for to-night, that I belong to *no* party. With regard to conservatism and ultraism, as the general division of opinion, running through all other questions and ranging men into parties—I am, in some views, a conservative. I profess to venerate the past. I value the re-

sults of past experience. I think they are to be parted from with great caution. I think it is monstrous for an individual man to stand up against the collected experience of the world and say, "it is nought—it is nonsense." I have a sort of reverence for what the whole race of my fellows have come to think and feel, after a trial and progress of six thousand years. I do not believe that the stream which has flowed so far is a miserable puddle, or black as Styx and Acheron. And whoever says that—whoever says, "away with the past! let us have a new world to-day!"—whoever, forgetting that all good changes must be gradual and slowly wrought out, proposes to carry a people at once from absolutism and ignorance into the largest liberty and suffrage, or rashly to transfer woman from her accustomed sphere to seats in the Legislature and the Cabinet, seems to me to have fallen into the madness of reaction against old abuses. And yet, on the other hand, the conservatism that desires to hold all fast where it is—that is prejudiced and set against all changes, all reforms—that for ever says, "let things alone; they are very well"—why, it is a conservation that would stop the progress, and quench the hope, and challenge the very destiny of the world.

But let us go, as I proposed, to some of the special reforms.

And, first, to that which is so called, and which is advocated by some, though I believe not by many, of the gentler sex, under the name of "Woman's Rights." Now, I should not wonder if the very terms of this statement should be partly displeasing to two sorts of persons. Some *women* might not choose that theirs should be called "the gentler sex,"—and certainly the appellation is not very likely to be given to such re-

cusants—they say that their just claims are always compromised by this apparent courtesy. And it may offend some strong conservative *men*, that this subject should be seriously mentioned at all—that it should, so to speak, be tabled for discussion. But I stick to my point. I am neither a conservative nor an ultraist. I have always felt that woman has suffered great wrongs, not only among Indians and profligates, but in what is called our better modern civilization. It is not affection alone, not chivalry, not homage only, that woman demands—things easy to pay—but *justice*; a just sense of the true relations of mind to mind, of one human being to another. The right that lies in might, the right of the strong, is always a suspicious thing, dangerous to exercise, liable in fact to unintentional and unconscious abuse. I think that a man of just and delicate feeling will always watch himself on this point. I believe that, from the ordinary construction of the *marriage* tie, there is by coarse, uncultivated minds, an immense deal of wrong inflicted—of injustice, hardship, and cruelty endured; and that, even by better and more refined persons, woman is often deprived of the independence of character, the freedom to think and act for herself, to which she is entitled. Before God these parties are equal souls, with equal rights, though circumstances may make a difference; and I would never insert, in the marriage service, the word *obey* for woman; though, in ordinary cases of difference, if it comes to that, it would be, I think, her duty and her wisdom to yield her opinion. Yet I do not like the word *obey*, and should never desire a woman to use it to me; and, indeed, in the existing state of society, I have thought it the dictate of a just moral policy, as well as of true courtesy, to omit it. It *was* necessary,

I suppose, in the ruder age, in which the Apostle Paul wrote, to lay down so definite a precept as "wives obey your husbands," but it does not appear to me necessary or useful now.

I said that circumstances make a difference; and I mean a difference of pursuits between man and woman. Thus, I think, that the prosecution of business naturally belongs to the former—therefore the care of property—therefore some superior control of it. But, it does not follow that the ascendancy should be so complete and irresponsible as it is. The wife may be a silent partner in the concern; but she ought to be regarded as a partner more than she is, and there ought to be more checks upon the power of an improvident husband to waste the property she brings into the partnership. And I protest altogether against the power of a drunken husband to take his wife's *earnings* to squander upon his vices; but yet I doubt whether, in general, *two equal property-holders in a family* would not breed more difficulty than it would relieve.

As to education—let every human being be educated—let every human mind be expanded as much as possible. The theory of an essential difference of intellectual powers in the sexes, of any other difference than circumstances make, is, in my view, too absurd to be considered.

So far I go; but here I must stop—and stop short. When it is contended, that women should do business, labor out of doors as men do—should vote, appear in public life, hold office, be members of Congress, Cabinet Ministers, Presidents—and why not Captains and Commodores, as well?—I will not say what madness! though that is my feeling; but, I say, the laws of progress, the nature of persons, the relations to the mate-

rial world, the relations to the social body, forbid. I believe, indeed, that there is a constitutional difference between the sexes, which destines the one to out-of-door life, and the other to in-door life. If it be not so, I should like to have some one tell me, why the one has a *beard* and the other not. But if this be thought to be trifling with the subject; or, if the idea of such constitutional difference be said to be a matter of vague sentiment, then I point to palpable facts. Who must bear and nurse children? Who then must tend them? Who then must stay beneath the domestic roof? And which sex acquires, from these causes, a delicacy of frame and fibre unknown to the other? Can women go out to work—hunt, fish, fell trees, quarry stone, build houses—as well as the men? Can they leave their little charge at home, and go into the courts, to Congress, to the camp? Deliver us from a Congress of *men* and *women*! Our politics are vexed and perplexed enough already. What they would be with that element of female fascination, impulse, and sensitiveness flung into them, were hard to say or imagine; but a burning house, with the most delicate and volatile oil flung upon it, might give one an idea.

Turn, now, to another social question—that between the *family* and the *phalanstery*. The great argument for the latter is, that it would free the world from much of its ignorance, pauperism, misery. Men living in community, it is said, would relieve one another's labor—enlighten, cheer, help one another. Those dark pools of physical and moral degradation opened, especially in our cities, into which the poor, the indolent, the imbecile, the reckless, are falling year after year—the horror and almost the despair of good men—would be cleansed and cleared out. I must doubt it.

The most powerful preservative, perhaps, in the world, from indolence, improvidence and degradation, is individual responsibility. It seems to me an indispensable law of progress. You take that away, or you essentially weaken it, in the phalanstery. Every man, then, is to be fed, and clothed, and housed, and made tolerably comfortable, let him do as he will. Or, if not; if you drive him away because he will not work, you make him more poor and miserable than he was before, and a desperate outcast and marauder into the bargain; and, moreover, you give up the phalanstery principle.

For myself, I certainly should not like to live in a phalanstery. I must say, I should very much rather not; but I should yet more fear its influence, *i. e.* upon the moral *freedom* of men. *Epidemics* there would be bad enough; but I should dread, still more, epidemics in the mind—the infection of example. When, in the theological school, we heard a young man declaim, we always knew what college he came from. When I passed through Germany, I saw a great many villages, every house in which was built like every other; there was a ruling fashion in building, which, it seemed, nobody could depart from. I should be afraid men's minds, in a phalanstery, would be like those houses. I should distrust such a mechanism. The disparity, the conflict of minds, is the very nurture of truth and means of progress. These schools of human device will never compete successfully with that great school which God has opened, when "He set the solitary" not in phalansteries, but "in families."

Let us now turn to forms of *human violence*, and inquire wherein, and how far, and how fast, they can

be stayed? I would to God the time might come, when not one drop of human blood shall stain the earth, by the hand of executioner or soldier! But there are some things that are fast fixed in human nature—for that nature is one of our laws—fast fixed in human nature, and are not easily or quickly to be removed. A man stands before me—a good and innocent man—and against him comes, in open day, or steals upon him with stealthy step, a monster in human shape, and murders him before my eyes. My feeling cries out—all human feeling, from the beginning of the world, cries out—“Thy blood ought to pay for that accursed act!” Now, I am not to be reasoned out of this feeling by any theory of punishment being inflicted solely as an example, or for the good of society. That *is* one *object* of punishment, but not its special significance. The murderer *ought to suffer adequately for what he has done*; and if he himself were immediately inspired with the right feeling, he would say, “Take my life for his. I demand it.” This sense of justice, I say, is not to be ignored, or scorned, or scandalized, as unchristian. And it is very poor jesting to propose, that the man or the minister of religion who takes this ground, should himself become the hangman.

Can justice, in this matter, yield to mercy? Can a milder punishment be safely substituted? I do not know. I would to Heaven it might! But this I know: that any reasoning—call it mild, merciful, Christian-like, or what you will—that takes out the element of righteous justice from the penalty, takes out the very essence and heart of the law, and makes it a mere trick to awe the world to virtue.

I look for better times. I hope the day will come

when some other punishment may be substituted for that awful execution, that stops, at once and for ever, the current of life. But I believe that the time will *never* come, when he who sheddeth man's blood will not *deserve* that by man his blood shall be shed. And if he deserves that, does he not deserve the lesser punishment which mercy proposes to inflict? And is the solemn sense of justice to be denied and cast out of the penalty? If it were, mercy itself would have no meaning.

And so with regard to war. Who will not hope that the horrible custom is to be done away? It cannot stand for ever, if there is to be a progress in the world. Barbarous trial of brute strength—for that is what it is—brute strength brought in to settle the claims of nations; a game of kings and rulers, where the people are always losers; a waster of treasure and life, slaying thousands and ten thousands; a payment of blood and tears to buy desolation and misery;—if there is common sense in the world, and civilization is not a name, and progress a dream, this must come to an end.

But it must come to an end because of the very enormity of the thing. Not every fine-spun argument against it, is sound and strong; not every proposition made for its abolition, is rational and wise. To deny us all right to defend ourselves against violence and wrong, or to take life in any case, or to keep arms and munitions for our protection—such dialectics, to my mind, do not help the good cause. But let the horribleness of the thing be shown and be insisted on—be portrayed in all its hatefulness and atrocity, till men shall feel that they can bear it no longer.

And now let us come to the great and terrible

question of *slavery*. In the survey which I am taking of certain questions, this, the greatest of all, cannot be omitted ; and on this subject let me say, I still adhere to my position. I am not an ultraist. I have, to a certain extent, sympathies with both the parties to this question ; I respect the feelings and situation of the people of the South ; I share the sentiments of the bulk of the people at the North. And as I have had the fortune to be misconstrued on this subject, I am still more desirous to use the privilege which I have craved this evening, of speaking for myself.

In a speech which I made in Pittsfield last winter, and also in a lecture which I delivered in Boston, I did not discuss the present fugitive slave law, though I was immediately represented as a violent advocate for it, but rather addressed myself to the question whether we at the North could, in conscience, yield our assent to *any* such bill—to *any* bill that should give the Southern master the power to reclaim one of his slaves that had fled to us for refuge. Should we make our Northern cities “cities of refuge” to the fugitive ; or should we say to him, “Under the circumstances, we do not think it right to offer you an asylum and protection?” *That* was the question. Were we bound by the highest obligations of conscience and humanity to say to the master, “You shall not have your slave ; we will not hear of rendition ; we will have no law about it, any way ?” The abolitionists themselves might have seen in that speech the painful struggle of a conscience to decide, not whether this (to them so odious) law could be obeyed, but whether any law of the kind could be obeyed. After the publication of that speech, I received a letter from a friend, saying, “Your speech has been read among us with much satisfaction ; even

the greatest of our abolitionists has nothing to say against it, but that you ought to have denounced the present bill." I replied, "Tell my friend, that of the two I am the greater abolitionist; for I so detest *all* fugitive slave bills, that I have hardly patience to go into detail and discrimination—to say which is better and which is worse."

But I did not denounce the bill for other reasons. I felt hardly competent to do so. It had been framed by the supreme legislature of the land; and whether it was constitutional, whether it was the best law that could be made, I was not prepared to say. Besides, when the tide of public opinion was running so strong against the law, as to threaten, in my opinion, to break down the barriers of the Constitution and the Union, I did not think it right to join the malcontents in decriing the law. Moreover, I wished to put the question at once upon its ultimate merits. The main offence does not lie in *this* law, but in *any* effective law. As I said in my speech—"The abolitionists ought themselves to see that they will never be satisfied. I myself feel that no bill can ever be framed that will not be distasteful to me."

I am sensible that this language cannot be agreeable to the people of the South. I am, doubtless, a very bad controversialist, being of no side, saying what I think, without proposing to satisfy any party—thinking, indeed, that in this fearful debate there is something right on both sides. But this, at least, must be plainly said: *Nothing* can make a fugitive slave bill palatable to us at the North; if we submit to any such law, it is the most reluctant concession to a sense of duty. All men, North and South, may easily understand that. The people of the South should take no

offence at it ; it is what they themselves would feel, in a change of circumstances. If a fugitive Russian serf or Algerine captive were seized in the streets of Charleston, to be borne back to bondage, every humane and high-minded man there would behold the spectacle with pain and indignation. And if a man, albeit of a different color and lineage from my own, yet a *man*, and a man, too, perhaps, who had lived ten years here by my side, and had done me kindly offices,—if such a man were caught before my door by the Southern emissary, and manacled, to be remanded to slavery, my tears would start and my blood would boil with indignation and pity at the sight.

It is a spectacle wounding to humanity. As between the master and the slave, it is the infliction of a great wrong. It may be our duty not to interfere—we cannot immediately right all wrongs in the world ; and this is one ; but it is not our duty to suppress the feelings of justice and humanity that arise in our bosoms. The people of the South should understand this ; and it much concerns them to understand it. For they have essentially hurt their position before the world, by demanding this new law. They had better, in my opinion, have left things as they were—left the law to stand as an acknowledgment of their constitutional right—but at the same time, let it fall into desuetude. They recover a few slaves—a very few ; but they outrage the sentiments of all mankind. They do not *want* among them the men whom they recapture—certain as these men are, when carried back, to spread disaffection among their people—likely also to be persons of a *better class* among their slaves, and more fit for freedom. They had better let them go. As I have known slaveholders to *say*, “ If one of our slaves escapes,

we shall not pursue him ; he has a natural right to be free ; if he makes that perilous struggle for freedom, let him have it ; the *most* of our people do not wish to leave us ; they are sensible that they are not qualified to take care of themselves ; let things remain in this way ; we must accept the good and evil of our condition, and make the best of it."

Still it would be wrong for us to interfere between the master and slave, with any other force than that of argument. We have promised that we would not do so. It is a part of our national compact. Our Union was founded, in part, upon that agreement. No Union can stand without it. And if we break the compact in behalf of *fugitive* slaves, *why not as well in behalf of the rest ?* Yet the abolitionists themselves disclaim any intention, by force or law, to touch the body of slaves in actual possession of their masters. But *why not ?* One man stands on one side of a State line, and is a fugitive ; another stands ten feet or ten miles from him on the other side, and is in the hands of his master. Can a few feet, or a few miles, make any difference in the *principle* that justifies interference ? I press the question. Why do not the abolitionists make a crusade upon the South to deliver the slave ? Is it because we have made a compact with the Southern States to leave their slaves in their possession ? But so have we made a compact not to withhold, but to surrender the fugitive. I say again—why do they not make a slave-delivering crusade ? Is it because of the evil, and mischief, and peril that it would involve ? Then I say that the same argument should restrain them from interfering to rescue the fugitive.

But *here*, it will be said, is the point where the *question of conscience* presses : "The fugitive has a right

to be free; if you help the master to catch and hold him, you *violate* his right; and it is a *sin* before Heaven." I answer, that the compact does *not* bind me, and no bill formed in compliance with it ought to bind me, to do any such thing. "What!" it may be said, "do not the constable, and the commissioner, and the bystanders lend their aid—do *they* not catch, and hold, and enslave the man?" I answer, no. By the laws of this government, the man is a slave before they touch him; and no action can *make* him to be that which he *is*. But suppose it were otherwise. Suppose that South Carolina were a foreign State, and that we had made a convention with her, in the very words of our Constitution. What *is* that bond? Not to catch, hold, or enslave her people that flee from her, but simply to "*deliver them up*"—simply not to withhold them. "What is the meaning, then," it will be asked, "of the legal process that precedes this delivery?" I understand it to be this. We will not let irresponsible persons come into our territory and seize whom they will, and bear him off to bondage. If you claim any man as owing you service, you must prove that he *is* the man you say he is, and not another. You must prove this, according to the forms of law. The *legal* marshal shall take him—before the *legal* commissioner; his case shall be *legally* examined; and then, if he is given up to his master, we simply promise you that there shall be no rescue with the strong hand; civil order and the course of the law shall be protected, though the *posse comitatus* be called out for the purpose. I repeat it; the bill does *not* make us slave-catchers. The Southern master, or his agent, lays his hand upon a colored man here at the North, and says, "This is one of my people, and he must come with me."

The bill says, "Stop; you must not take this man as one of your people till you have *proved* that he is such. I lay my hand on him to *protect* him, till you have established this fact. If you make out your case, then the Northern citizen is bound by the Constitution and the law of the land not to interfere in the matter. The master may take his slave—it is his own affair. And if there shall be any attempt at rescue, the bystanders are required, as they are in all cases of resistance and violence, to sustain the law and the public order."

The point here involved is, doubtless, most material. I firmly deny that it was ever meant by the Constitution that we should assist the master to catch or carry back his slave. The language of the instrument is, that he "shall be *delivered up*." This phrase very naturally expresses what would follow as the result of the civil process, supposing the claim to be made out. The fugitive is in the hands of the Court—of the legal authority appointed to decide upon his case. The Court "delivers him up"—*i. e.*, it simply says to the claimant, "you may take him." The action of the Court is not aid, nor assistance, nor approval, nor sympathy with the claimant; but simple rendition. "Delivering up" a slave, like "delivering up" a criminal or a man charged with crime, is not constituting ourselves judges of his case; but it is simply saying to a neighboring sovereignty, "we leave him to you; we do not interfere to protect the fugitive."

Indeed, the real offence in this matter seems to lie in the re-enactment of this law at all, and not in the terms of the present bill. There was no trial by jury *before*, no writ of *habeas corpus*. The Court now constituted is as *respectable*, the investigation as *ample* as

before. There is no serious danger, and no sincere apprehension that free men—*i. e.*, men by birth or purchase free—will be remanded to slavery. There is no reason to think that many persons will be reclaimed any way. I do not believe that ten persons have been recovered, or that twenty ever will be. The real offence, I repeat, lies in the re-enactment of the law. I believe it is felt by many, in this country and in England, that it is a base subserviency to Southern threats, or a sacrifice of principle to policy. I do not so regard it. I believe it was right thus to re-assure the Southern States, since they required the re-assurance, that we did not mean to interfere with their system, nor to violate the compact of the Constitution. And if we did not and do not mean to do this; if we do not mean to open an asylum for Southern slaves in the North, then it was not unmeet to make a declaration that should prevent them from seeking it; and such I understand really to be the main purpose and effect of this Fugitive Slave Bill. It will not be the means, perhaps, of apprehending twenty slaves; but it will probably prevent hundreds from coming here. And if we do not mean to have them come here, nor to hold out any lure to them; if we do not think that *this is the way to avert from the nation a great and overshadowing peril*, it is proper that we should say so.

In truth, as it seems to me, it only needs that a man, instead of indulging in vague, and it may be, eloquent declamation, should take some decided ground on this subject, to be brought to a right conclusion. What do you *say*? I ask. Would you, as the member of a national sovereignty, American or English, propose rudely to violate one of the written bonds of your Constitution? Do you, as an American citizen, mean to

say to the Southern States, "We will break our covenant with *you*, come what may. We will not wait to reason; we will not wait for any legal modification; we will break the bond to-day." You do not, you never did, say that. There has been a Fugitive Slave Law in existence all along; you never took any such ground with regard to it. Well, then, if you do not propose to overthrow the Constitution and break up the Union, you must acquiesce in some kind of Fugitive Slave Law. And it is in vain to say that the present law is so much worse than the former, as to justify a resistance now, which you never thought of before. In fact it is not worse, but better, for the slave than the former.

The declamation on this subject may be eloquent; I have received letters from gentlemen, both at home and abroad, full of eloquent expostulation, full of beautiful pleas for humanity. I sympathize with those pleas. I would make the case of every man—American, English, or African—my own. If there be wrongs, if there be stripes, if there be sorrows in the world, I would feel them as if they were inflicted upon myself. And I must take simple leave to say, that I see nothing in the *humanity* of Abolition writers and speakers that makes me feel that I must humble myself in its presence. Sorrows and wrongs enough there are in the very structure of society, and we must struggle out of them as well as we can. But when that fathomless abyss of calamities and sorrows is opened to me, that would be made by the sundering of our national bond, I must pause, I must deliberate, I must consider with anxious and painful care what is my duty; and that is what I have endeavored to do.

I say I must consider. I must consider the great

bond of the Union, which we must not break ; and I must consider the rights of the fugitive too. Liberty *is* his own proper right ; and I believe that every slave-master feels it—feels that he *himself* would escape, if he could, in similar circumstances. It is the very impulse of humanity to do so. I can conceive, indeed, of a higher thing than this impulse. I may be *reminded* of the case of Socrates bowing to the majesty of the Athenian law, and *refusing* to escape ; and I admire the conduct of Socrates. And I only say, show me the *slave-man* who, for the sake of the public order and law, is disposed to do the same thing, and I will admire *him* ; but for *me* to compel him to do it, is quite another thing. I say I would *admire* him. I said, in my speech, “ I would consent that my own brother ”—for certainly I was never guilty of the vulgar irreverence of thus alluding to a more venerable relative ; and those who have frequently asserted it, must settle the account with their truth and decency as they can—*this* is what I said, both in my speech and lecture : “ I would consent ”—for I said nothing of *sending* any body—“ I would *consent* that my own brother, my own son, should go (*i. e.* into slavery)—*ten times rather* would I go myself—than that this Union should be sacrificed for me or for us ; ” and I am ready to stand by this as a just and honorable sentiment ; and I can only wonder that any man should think it extravagant or ridiculous. Indeed, I suppose the only chance of making it appear so, was to connect with it the falsehood to which I have just referred.

And now let me add, that in all this I place myself on the ground of moral conviction, as truly so as any abolitionist in the world. *Conscience—conscience*

—must I repeat it?—*conscience* is the ground on which I stand. Continually is it said or implied by the Abolitionists and their sympathizers, that *they* look to conscience for their law, and *we* to the State, or to State expediency. No; *this* rather, in my view, is the difference. *They* take the bare instinct of conscience for their guide—we profess to take the wisdom of conscience for ours; they take *one* view of the matter—we are obliged to take *many*. There is an important distinction here, which it seems to me is constantly overlooked. The principle of conscience is one thing—the application of the principle is another thing. The former may be right—the latter entirely wrong. What great moral mistake was there ever in the world, that has not sheltered itself, and that honestly, under the plea of conscience! Religious intolerance, political proscription, wild fanaticism, “wrath, malice, and all uncharitableness,” have ever had that plea. Conscience is no more exempt from aberration than any other principle. Its very elevation may be an exposure. It derives from Heaven, and will not bear of earth-born question or doubt. It stands so high, that it cannot *see* the plain paths of duty that lie around it. It is self-confident in the same proportion. It is blinded—by excess of light. It is made giddy—by the pure air of abstractions. It sins the more—through the assurance of being right. It is guilty of inhumanity, for the same reason that Paul was, because it verily thinks that it is doing God service. How much of the hard censure, cruel defamation, and moral ruffianism, that we see to-day, has its origin in this instinct of conscience! Men were not made to be governed by instincts, however holy, but by reason, also—by reflection—by circumstances—by the *right*,

indeed, but also by the universal welfare, which is ever coincident with the right.

Upon the ground of a reflective conscience, therefore, I endeavor to place myself; and these points are very clear to me.

Firstly: That the immediate emancipation of the Southern slaves would not be right; they are not prepared for freedom, nor do they generally desire it.

Secondly: That till this event takes place, it would be fatal to that order of things, fatal to our peace and Union, for us to hold them free and irreclaimable, the moment they touch our soil.

Thirdly: That, therefore, there *must* be some kind of fugitive slave law.

And Fourthly: That the present law is not more stringent than its predecessor; that it contains no new features of intolerable tyranny, such that it must be rejected on this account; that it is *not* rejected on this account, but because *any* effective bill would be disliked and resisted.

Alas! the tide is sweeping on like fate, bearing on its bosom untold calamities and perils. In 40 years, it is estimated that there will be nine millions of slaves in the Southern States; the worn-out land will not be able to bear them, nor their impoverished masters to keep them. Horrible convulsions must ensue—civil or servile wars. Something, then, must be done, and soon done, to avert the catastrophe. The nation must put forth its strength; North and South must put brotherly shoulders to the work; especially does all original motive power to help, lie with our brethren in the South. And yet we spend all this dread interval in mutual recrimination! instead of devising ways of relief, we devise stumbling-blocks. It is the pleasure

of many at the South to represent us as ferocious and selfish fanatics; and of many at the North to heap opprobrium and indignity upon men as kind, and generous, and honorable, and conscientious as ourselves. One thing, at least, is perfectly plain to me: that nothing but moderation on all sides—nothing but a calmness and brotherly kindness such as we have not yet seen, can conduct us out of these perils—can solve for our country this tremendous problem.

204 New York
from the Public Library
50/10-5-1

2

AN ADDRESS,

DELIVERED UNDER THE

LIBRARY
OF THE

OLD ELM TREE IN SHEFFIELD,

WITH SOME REMARKS ON THE

Great Political Question of the Day.

BY

ORVILLE DEWEY.



NEW YORK:
C. S. FRANCIS & CO., 554 BROADWAY.
BOSTON: 53 DEVONSHIRE STREET.
1856.



A D D R E S S .

MY FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS :

I have been asked to say something at this year's Anniversary of our "Old Elm Tree Association," in a manner somewhat more formal, than the free and easy interchange of thought, which we have had on former occasions. Not to discourage that free utterance, either now or at any time ; it has nevertheless been thought that it would be well, occasionally to change the mode of our discussion, by the introduction of a set discourse. With this view I stand in my lot to day.

I confess that I think much more of the social use of this Anniversary Pic-nic, than of any other—of the opportunity it affords for mutual acquaintance and neighborly intercourse. I value it *most of all* for this—its helping to create among us a common interest and a common feeling, to remove prejudices, and bring us nearer together. And when I venture to thrust a formal discourse into our social communion, I feel something as a learned professor did, when once presiding at a Literary Festival, who, on being desired to bring forward the set toasts, said, "he did not want to interrupt the hilarity of the occasion."

Making speeches, I know, is apt to be a terribly serious thing, both to those who make, and to those

These dim vaults,
 These winding aisles, of human pomp or pride,
 Report not. * * * * * *

But thou art here—thou fill'st
 The solitude. Thou art in the soft winds,
 That run along the summit of these trees
 In music;—thou art in the cooler breath,
 That from the inmost darkness of the place
 Comes, scarcely felt; the barky trunks, the ground,
 The fresh, moist ground, are all instinct with thee,
 Here is continual worship."

I cannot repeat the whole to you, but only commend it to your reading.

But to proceed to the point on which I wish to say something more specifically—an aged tree stands as a witness upon the field of history. Could this venerable Elm tell us what has passed beneath it, we should know more than history can teach us now. The Indian was here, long before our fathers came; and survived their coming, indeed, for many years. There are some of our people yet living I believe, who remember the last of their chiefs, old Kunkepot—remember him hurrying through this street that passes by us, with his bow and arrows under his arm—running indeed, because he could not steadily walk. This street, I have heard, was the Indian path of old; but alas! the poor survivor stumbled on the paths of his fathers—subdued by the deadly fire-water that has been the curse and ruin of his people. Civilization did not smooth the way for *him*.

It is a noteworthy fact, that the Northern races, the strongest and least easily excited natures, men of the sanguine-bilious temperament, with boundless demands for enjoyment and sluggish returns, are most exposed to this temptation; and such are the Indians. Kunkepot left his name upon one of the most beauti-

ful tracts of hill and meadow in the town; and "his mark" is still found on some of the old deeds, that give our people title to their lands.

They loved the river-glades—these children of nature—and I have no doubt that this spot where we now stand, was a favorite resort with them, overlooking a long reach of the valley and meadow above. Here, where friends gather now in gay groups, and children sport in merry gambols—here came the stealthy Indian; and through the leafy screen of surrounding thickets, sent out keen glances for his prey, or for his foe. His battles are all over; his hunting-grounds have passed into the hands of strangers: the husbandman's plough invades his burial-places; the flint that sharpened his arrow-heads, falls useless into the furrow, and is picked up only as a relic of the old time.

How averse is this race of people to all the methods and ways of our civilization! One of our townsmen, one at least who studied the Law here, touched with the sense of higher than earthly things, consecrated himself to the service of religion, and after due preparation went as a missionary to the Indians. You will understand that I speak of Mr. Byington. From the homes of kindred and friends, as dear to him as they ever were to any man, he went away; and he has spent nearly forty years among strange and savage men, to instruct them. A heart more tender and true I believe, was never devoted to that holy office; and among the Choctaws and Cherokees on their new reservations beyond the Mississippi, he and his brethren seem to have some good prospect of achieving that miracle of modern history—the radical civilizing of the American Indian. Mr. Byington has made a dictionary and grammar of the Choctaw language; and the Bible, in

whole or in part is published in that tongue. God bless him in his work!

But if he and his fellow-laborers shall succeed in establishing and retaining in civilized abodes, those wild tribes, those Nimrods of the wilderness, it will be the first instance; all these races scattered over the North American Continent, have retired before the face of the white man, and have constantly and sturdily refused to adopt his manners. The Indian youth who were educated in Dartmouth College, eventually ran away to the woods; they liked the war song better than *Tityre tu patulæ*—they preferred to the shepherd's pipe under the beechen shade, the tomahawk and the scalping knife. The bees when they swarm, it is said, always fly westward; the Indians regard them as the precursors of the civilized man; and when they see a swarm of bees, as I was told in the South Country, they say "The pale faces are coming!" As bringing stings, however, rather than honey, they regard the pale faces; and they seem to prefer extermination to civilization. The last remnant of them, I believe, is gone from all our New England borders; from the hills and valleys around us, they have entirely passed away, leaving only their names in our streams and mountains—our Housatonic and Tauconic. Indeed, a very learned man has attempted to drive out one of their *names*. Prof. Hitchcock, who made a survey of the State when Mr. Everett was governor, proposed to call our Tauconic, Mount Everett! The next State-surveyor, perhaps, may be so obliging as to name our beautiful Housatonic after some other distinguished governor. I have all proper respect for the name of Everett; and I would do no injustice to the learned geologist. He may say that he only proposed to name

"*the Dome*" anew for us. But the *entire mountain* is only about ten miles long; and to name the highest point, is virtually to name the whole. No, let locomotives and steamboats have new names, but not the everlasting mountains.

But I must pass on to the time, when new actors appeared upon the scene that spreads around this aged Tree; when, for the first time since the creation, this valley and these hills were trodden by the steps of civilized men. This was about a century and a quarter ago.

There is something awful in the thought of the countless years that had gone before—the centuries stretching far up to the eldest date of time—those countless years and ages, from which no tradition, no word, no sound—nothing has come down to us. Life was here, but it left no mark. Wild beasts and wild men were here, but their forms have passed and vanished like shadows from the hill and valley, thousands of years ago. Yet to the eyes of those wild creatures—men or animals—these hills and mountains were once familiar and homelike. The bear guarded his young in his mountain-den; the wolf prowled for his prey in the night time; the stag walked at the head of his antlered herd in the freshness of morning; and the stealthy savage crept through the thicket, to pursue his game, or his enemy. At an earlier time, it is probable this valley was the bed of a lake. When the earth had passed through its volcanic period, in which it was perhaps, as the moon is now, dry and desolate; when, at any rate, the springs first trickled from the hills and mountains, they must have gathered themselves into basins and lakes; and if any of the surrounding planets had had an instrument like Rosse's

new telescope, which could discern a tree like this on the moon's surface if there was one; they would have seen the earth, doubtless, covered with mirrors—chains of mirrored waters, all over it. In process of time, these lakes wore away their barriers, and became rivers. It is easy to believe, that in the lower part of this town, where the hills approach near to each other, was one of these barriers; and another is still more perceptible in West Cornwall, just below the railroad station, where the Housatonic passes through a very narrow and rocky gorge.

But at length, from the shadow and silence of thousands of years, we come out into clear history. Instead of tradition and doubt and conjecture, we have a written book. And that is the Book of Records of this town of Sheffield. *Now*—thanks to the alphabet and the pen—the past begins to be instructive.

I have been looking over these records; and I propose to occupy a few moments of your time, with the early history of the fathers of the town. And the instructive point, to my mind, is the prodigious difference between an intelligent people taking care of their own affairs; and a people for whom leaders, barons, governors, take all the care off their hands.

Ever since I first saw the great landed estates of England and Germany, I have often thought, as I looked over this, my native valley, what the effect would have been if a Duke of Sheffield, with a charter from some English king or German emperor, had held this fair tract of hill and dale as his inalienable family possession, and all the people had been his serfs or tenants. They might have had a kind landlord; they might have had some one to take care of them, to fix their wages and rents, to build them a church, to settle their disputes,

to bid them come and go at his pleasure; but how different would it have been, from the vigorous municipality that sprung up on this new soil—its members *owners* of the farms they cultivated—freemen and voters, meeting to consult and act together for their common welfare.

It is striking to see what they did, and how they went on from the very beginning. The first page of the oldest Book of Records bears that, "This Book was given by the General Assembly at Boston in the year 1733." That was all that the Government did for the settlers: it gave them a book to record their doings, in Town Meeting assembled. It left them free to do what they would. Then follow several pages in this truly primitive record, describing the marks by which each proprietor's cattle should be known. "Japhet Bush's mark for his creatures, is a top-cut on the off-ear and a slit on the under side of the same." "James Saxton's mark for his creatures, is a half crop on the under side of each ear;" and so on through a dozen folio pages. The cattle, of course, ran at large in the woods, and they were known and claimed only by that rude handwriting upon the ear.

The first town meeting on record was held in January, 1733. In the officers chosen—a moderator, a clerk, select-men, a treasurer, constables, and tything-men—you see at once a municipal organization, a form of government. At the first business meeting, held on the 30th of the same month, they resolved to build a meeting-house, 45 feet long by 35 wide, and appointed a committee to carry the resolve into effect. In the March following, they voted to raise £100 (\$333 33—that was the value in the provincial currency)—for building the meeting-house, and £100 for the preach

ing of the gospel, and other town expenses. At the same time, they voted to allow Nathaniel Austin, "for his journey after a Gentleman to preach, three pounds and sixteen shillings." They were very intent upon this matter, it is evident—more, in fact, than upon any thing else; for it was the sole business that occupied them in three subsequent town meetings, held in June, October, and December of 1733. In the first, they invited Mr. Ebenezer Devotion to be their minister. Not succeeding in that, they next voted to hire Mr. Pomeroy to preach six weeks, and after having heard him, they met again to give him a call to be their pastor. All this failing, they next year gave a call to Mr. Jonathan Hubbard, which was accepted; they agreeing to give him £180 for a settlement, also to build him a good barn, and to pay him £100 salary, to be increased as they had ability; and it was afterwards increased to £130, fire-wood always included. I cannot help thinking that it would be but a reasonable following up of the good old liberality, if the town *now* were to build a parsonage for their minister. It would not be so much for its present means, as it was to build a barn in the old time. It would be well, I think, both for parish and minister. It costs him at least one quarter more to *live* now, than it did even twenty years ago. And if our parishes would secure a constant supply and permanent establishment of pastors—a subject of great and just anxiety in these days—they must consider, more than they have done, what is in justice *due* to men, who have spent eight or ten years and all their patrimony, to *prepare* to serve them.

Mr. Hubbard was settled in 1735. It was not till the beginning of this year, I suppose, that the meeting-house was raised; for I find a singular item or two

in the record, which, as showing the progress of things since then, it may not displease you to hear. The record says: "Voted to allow 20 gallons of rum for raising the meeting-house, or for town use," it adds—meaning, I suppose, for other occasions. Also, "Voted to allow 20 pounds of sugar, to go with the rum." Such were the customs of the time. The sugar is not voted to go with the rum *now*, but if they were put on the plank of a meeting-house scaffolding, they would both be voted to roll off.

When the house was built, it was to be seated; and this was done in a spirit at once reverent and democratic. In the first place, preference in seats was, by common vote, given to age, not to wealth or rank, but simply to age. I wonder whether young America would do that now! In the next place, when leave was given to certain persons to build *themselves* a pew, it was upon express condition that the floor of the pew should not be higher than the floor of the church. They remembered how in the home country, titled persons had sat in high pews above their fellows, and the Puritan spirit was high and resolute—high enough for a town resolve—against all that; they would have nothing of the kind here.

Mr. Hubbard continued to be pastor till 1764, nearly twenty years, when upon request of the people he resigned his charge. There were difficulties, and a council was called to inquire into them; but what they were, the record does not say. Mr. Hubbard died two or three years after.

His successor, after an interval of seven or eight years, was Mr. John Keep, who was settled in 1772—a man of whose sense, piety and urbanity, I have heard the old people of the town speak in emphatic and affectionate terms.

As I do not propose to bring down these notices of the settlement beyond the early time, I shall now turn back to other matters. Our fathers, in their corporate capacity, provided for religion *first*; then for other things as occasion required. Civilization was at work here; a field for free co-operation was opened; and it is interesting to see what the original settlers and owners of the soil set themselves about. They had a great deal to do, and they "worked like beavers."—I use the homely comparison, for it well shows in what a spirit of community, diligence and fidelity they labored. If their children will only carry *out* their work, our town will be beautiful enough; with planted trees and festal groves, and clean side-walks.

They laid out roads, first through the centre of the town, then across the valley, then along the sides of the hills and mountains, for they must go to meeting, and to mill, and to merry-makings also; for they had Thanksgivings, ay, and dances too, in the old time—Thanksgivings, in which, if there were not pyramids of ice-cream and dozens of champagne, there were acres of pumpkin-pies and barrels of cider; and dances also;—I remember being told by one who was a young girl seventy years ago, that she once rode on a pillion behind her father to the raising of a meeting-house in Pittsfield, and at evening the occasion was celebrated by a dance. I am told that some of the good people at Pittsfield see the matter in quite another light at this day, and wage war upon all dancing.

But to return. The people opened roads, as I was saying, and they built bridges, first over Green River, then over the Housatonic, which they called "the Great River." They took pains to improve the breed of cattle; they took care to preserve the game, at least

one species of it, for they appointed deer-reeves as well as hog-reeves. They gave a bounty for killing wolves, forty shillings the head; and blackbirds, twopence for every blackbird, and a penny each for the young. They had to defend their corn-fields against bears; and I have heard a story, and a true one, of a man encountering a bear on his night-watch, who struck him with his axe a blow that disabled him, yet not so but the grizzly enemy seized the watchman by the leg and held him fast all night—a terrible bedfellow, in the lonely corn-field, for the live-long night. They kept their lands with care and careful account; they chose surveyors to measure them, and fence-viewers to decide, I suppose, when the fences were sufficient; and they chose constables to look after delinquents, and tything-men to see to the keeping of Sunday; and the select-men were awful in those days.

At the same time, of course, they were attending to the schools, laying out school-districts, first in the centre of the town, then at each end, and then on either side, till these beacon-lights of civilization were shining all over the valley. In 1750, they voted to establish a grammar school. Of course, it was to be in the centre of the town; a common school for all could be nowhere else. They did not object to voting appropriations for it on that account, as a portion of our people now do. I do not wish to say any thing unreasonable upon this matter. I admit that the objection has its force, that a central school cannot equally accommodate all; *no* common object can be gained without some sacrifices. But what then? Will you demand that the post-office, or the church, shall equally accommodate every family? You cannot have it so, unless you build a big railroad all round the valley, and

put the church on wheels. The people in this neighborhood have erected a building for a high school, and they offer it for the use of the town. That was well, and all, I think, that could be expected. And there *ought* to be a school there, to educate our youth for college, for school-teaching, and for surveying. If not, Sheffield will soon cease to furnish its quota of instructed men for professional and public service; it *is* ceasing already; and I expect to have it said to me ere long, as I go about the country, "What sort of a place is *Sheffield*? We do not seem to hear of any body that comes from *there*; what sort of a people is it?" I hope I shall not be obliged always to answer, "Oh, it is an agricultural people, you know; good *people*, but they don't seem to care much about the higher education; and there are some sectional jealousies among them, I believe; they won't support a high school, though a fine building, beautifully situated, has been given them for it." Why, I know a country town in New Hampshire, that votes one hundred dollars a year for a public library; and all the people read it. They read Prescott's History of Cortez and Pizarro, and Philip II.; and Motley's History of the glorious Republic of Holland, that fought the battle for liberty as nobly as our own forefathers; and Irving's Columbus and Washington—books of which the common talk of all the intelligent world, is full. But what do *we* know, generally speaking, of Prescott and Motley, and Irving's Washington? And they would be *read*, if we had them; and many another book, which would relieve our weariness, and enliven the long, dark winter evenings, and enkindle the minds of our young people, and go some way to make a new life and a new world for us. I will pick out fifty volumes from my own books for a

public library, or a hundred, if I can part with them, (and I have no doubt others would make similar contributions,) if the town will vote fifty dollars a year to buy new books; and that for our population would be two cents apiece! Indeed we might have a Library Association, which, beside other things, could arrange to provide lectures for us from time to time.

Such combinations and measures were out of reach of the early fathers, but they did what they could; they established schools; and in later days they had a Town Library, to which I confess myself more indebted, before the age of eighteen, than to any other means of mental culture. They attended to the general health also, and more than once voted that the mill-dams should not let off the water below a certain point—a sanitary measure strangely and perilously neglected now. The town had a supervision of the grist-mills, and indeed a kind of property in them; and I observe on one occasion a vote to this effect—it seems that a Governor of Connecticut had an interest in one of those mills—“That there be a committee to request Jonathan Law, Esq., Governor of Connecticut, forthwith to repair the Grist-mill on Schaup’s River, and upon his neglect or refusal, to eject him off!” They had the usual Saxon passion for territory and annexation; they petitioned the General Court to extend the limits of the town on the west to the ridge of Tauconic, which, it seems, was done. And at another time, when John Tuller petitioned to be set off to the township of Egremont, they refused, and sent Mr. Sedgwick (afterwards Judge Sedgwick) to plead their case before the General Court at Boston. Mr. Tuller, however, succeeded; and his house is the first you pass on entering the village of Egremont, bearing the date on its walls in letters of brick, 1761.

I must now say something, in the last place, of the interest which the Town took in the public affairs of the American Colonies. And I cannot help mentioning in this connection, that its interest extended beyond its own people, to the broader ground of humanity. In the warrant for the Town Meeting to be held on the 25th of February, 1774, I find this item:—
 “To take into consideration the present inhuman practice of enslaving our fellow-creatures, the natives of Africa.” And by-the-by, I have heard it said that the first slaves freed by our State Bill of Rights, were in this town. But with reference to the Colonies and what was denominated “the alarming condition” of public affairs, I find the town thoroughly aroused more than three years before the Declaration of Independence. At a meeting held on the 5th of Jan., 1773, a committee of eleven persons was chosen, of which Mr. Sedgwick was chairman; and on the 12th of the same month, the town was assembled to hear its report. It is a remarkable Document, covering five folio pages, and going over the whole ground of the Colonial grievances. It is bold and manly, and at the same time expresses a deep and even filial sorrow, at the wrongs which the people were suffering from the home Government. But the inhabitants of the town did not stop with words. The Records for the years 1774, ’75 and ’76 are full of measures, to help the common cause. They bought ammunition, raised troops, set apart one fourth of the militia for minute men, who were to be especially drilled for service and to be in constant readiness to march. They made collections in money, “for the poor people of Boston and Charlestown.” They chose Delegates, John Fellows and William Whiting, to represent them in the Provincial Congress, which was to

meet in Cambridge on the 1st of February, 1775. And on the 18th June, 1776, they voted formal rebellion in the resolve that "should the Honorable Continental Congress in their wisdom think it for the interest and safety of the American Colonies to declare said Colonies independent of the kingdom of Great Britain, they the said inhabitants of Sheffield, will solemnly engage, with their lives and fortunes to support them in their measures."

As an illustration of the spirit of the town, an anecdote was told me some years ago, by one of the oldest inhabitants, Deacon Callender, which I think worth preserving. My informant was 10 years old at the time referred to in the anecdote, and remembered the circumstances very well. A liberty-pole was erected, and the whole town was assembled on the occasion. On the very night following, it was cut down. The next day, the people gathered from all quarters, like a swarm of bees, and that, in no very amiable mood, to inquire into the matter. They soon discovered that Dan Raymond, the only Tory in town—a man of a highly respectable position—had hired a humbler person to fell the Liberty-Tree. Their resolve was prompt, and the execution immediately followed. All the men and boys in the town were formed into two lines, and the principal offender was required to pass through the lines, and, hat in hand, to ask pardon of every man and boy in it; "and," said my aged informant, "Dan Raymond bowed, and though I was but 10 years old, asked pardon of *me*." They then took the humbler culprit, tarred and feathered him, and in this condition put him on the leanest and most bare-boned horse they could find, and compelled him to ride up and down through the whole village, and to stop at every house

and ask pardon of those within. Then they planted the Liberty Tree again; and it stood as long as they pleased. I wish I had a piece of it.

I do not mean to cast any undue opprobrium on Mr. Raymond because he was a Tory; I am accounted a sort of Tory myself, in what is called the present revolutionary crisis in the country; and as no speech can or will be made in these days, without some allusion to public affairs, and as I do not like to be misconstrued by my fellow-townsmen, I will take up a few moments, if you will give me your patience, in expressing my thoughts upon the terrible question that now agitates the whole country.

If a man should go out in the hunting grounds of Africa, and should throw his lasso over the neck of a horse, and bring it home, and subdue and subject it to domestic use, we should say it was right; for we believe that God made that animal for our service. But if he should throw his lasso over the neck of a man, roving wild and free in the wilderness—should tear him from his family and his home, should put chains on his limbs, and bring him over the sea, and sell him and his children after him, into hopeless bondage, we should pronounce that a monstrous wrong. And no talk about civilizing, or christianizing, or improving the African Race, could ever stand against that conviction. It is a conviction, I say, intrenched in the very heart of humanity; all the world has agreed to call the slave trade, piracy—the man with the lasso is a pirate—there is no darker name for crime than slave-trader; the very men who deal in slaves at the South *now*, are held infamous and excluded from all good society; and I never talked with a Southern man, who did not say, “this *selling* of slaves is a painful part of

our system;" well may they say it: and now I say, all this being admitted, can any man in his heart pronounce and feel that this system is a good thing, an excellent thing, an admirable system?

Our fathers did not think so. The Colonies protested against it. The men of the Revolution looked upon it as an *evil*, and not as a good; and they agreed, North and South together, by an Ordinance, to exclude it for ever from the North Western Territory. They never thought—nobody ever thought that it was possible it might spread far West and South, till it enveloped half the Continent. It had retired from the North; it would retreat from the Middle States; it would be confined to the rice and cotton fields; it might be modified there, or it might die out; at any rate it was *there*; they could not help it; they must submit to it, and get along with it, as they could.

But now a great change has come over the spirit of the South; and it is a change which alters all our moral and political relations with slavery, except one—the old compact of non-interference. I do not say that this change is universal at the South. I believe that many hold to the old opinion; we are always mistaking partisan zeal for public sentiment—the agitated surface for the conservative depths of society. I was in a company of twenty Southern gentlemen a year and a half ago, where the subject of African slavery was freely discussed, and seventeen of the twenty held that it must and would die out, and disappear from this country. But it is the determination of certain public leaders and of a large party at the South, *now* to *espouse* the system; to maintain that it is a good institution and ought to be perpetual; to demand for the slave-interest an equal share in the partition of the

States between slave and free labor—an equal share in the Government—a share, not as other property, but *more* than any other property or population in the land; and in consequence, Texas has been admitted with leave to form four new slave States; the Missouri compromise has been broken down; and the most violent efforts are made to introduce and establish slavery in Kansas.

Now against all this, against the whole opinion and this whole course of conduct, with all my might I protest. I am an humble individual, I have but little influence to exert; by my profession, or by the public opinion concerning it, I am excluded from all share in the government of the country; but if I had influence and power, I would say to my brethren of the South—if I were confronted with them *now*, face to face, I would say to them, respectfully but frankly and firmly, “You are in the wrong; you *certainly* are in the wrong; your judgment is wrong, your course is wrong; the moment you left the *toleration* for the *espousal* of this system of human slavery, you lost the sympathy of all men; you cannot legitimate the system to our human conscience and feeling; you cannot make it an honored and praiseworthy act to *buy and sell men*; no, no, you cannot; the whole civilized world is against, you; it will be against you more and more; even if you could throw off Northern interference and the Northern connection, and form a republic for yourselves, your republic would lie under the social ostracism of the whole world. For God’s sake, consider what you are doing, and where you are going!” Pardon, my friends, the solemnity of the adjuration. I speak only in the right of my own poor thought, but it cries to Heaven in its very weakness. But I would say to the

whole country—consider and consider soon. If extension—extension of the system is to go on, the 3,000,000 of slaves will in time become 30,000,000. What in heaven's name are we to do with them? They will grow in intelligence; they will band in servile wars; it is impossible to hold in safe hands such a tremendous element as this expanding humanity, thirty million strong. The only safe measure, in my opinion, is to stop this expansion, before the mass of evil and peril becomes too unwieldy for our grasp; to contract, not extend the area of slavery; to let Virginia and Maryland and Kentucky and Missouri become free States—the point to which they are tending—and in due time either to prepare these people for freedom, and emancipate them, or else to induce multitudes of them to return to Africa, and to enable them to do it, by all the resources of the nation applied to that end. I am not a legislator, but if I were, I would never vote for another step of extension to the slave-area; and for such a stand on this question, I have the decisive words of Clay and Webster themselves. I would never vote Kansas to the doom of Virginia, to impoverishment, to poor culture, to *breeding and selling men for a living!* I would never vote Kansas to slave labor, which, by long and solemn compromise, was pledged to free labor. If Kansas must come in as a slave State, it would be because I could not help it.

Heaven is witness that I do not say these things in any unkindness to the South. I know many of its people but to esteem, very highly to esteem and honor them. I do not know the body of them. I am not acquainted with plantation life in the South. The great evils of the Southern system doubtless are *there—not in cities*; and I believe that they are *great evils*. I

believe that all candid and thoughtful men among the planters admit it. There may be less cruelty than is often alleged, but there is great cruelty ; there may not be many Legrees, but there *are* Legrees. Where irresponsible power and violent passions hold the rein over a subject race, we know there must be cruelty ; and there must be a certain inhumanity ; and a passionate self-will, prompt to strike ; and an enervating, nay fearful self-indulgence nurtured under such a system, especially in the young. Why do Southern parents send their sons to the North to be educated ? Let them give the reasons, and they will give a terrible argument against slavery ! That cannot be a good home for civilization, for Christianity, for morality, concerning which the parent, when choosing a place to educate his child, says, “ Not *here* ; he must not stay *here*.”

I am accounted a moderate man on this subject, as I said before ; and I am willing to be thought to speak from the moderate side in this question. I *will* endeavor, for my part, to see *both* sides of it. I have talked much with men, both, at the North and South upon it. I have talked with good men at the South, who said, and honestly said,—the introduction of the African people into this country, though no blessing to *us*, is a blessing to *them* ; it is a grand means under providence, for civilizing and christianizing them. Nay, and strange as you may think it, I have heard the slave-man himself fervently thank Heaven that his progenitors were brought to this country ; because by that means he had attained to the Christian’s joy and hope. And I have seen Churches that numbered from 500 to 2,500 colored communicants. And I have seen men and woman—holders of slaves—who were not only humane, but conscientious and considerate towards

their people—watching over them, listening to their complaints, giving medicine for their ailments, instructing them in Sunday-schools—instructing their children in the week-time—laboring in every way for their comfort and improvement. And whoever would truly describe the life of our Southern people, should *not leave out this class*—for it *is* a class. I have listened also to what Southern apologists have said in another view—that this burden of slavery was none of their choosing; that it was entailed upon them; that they cannot immediately emancipate their people; that they are not qualified to take care of themselves; that this state of things must be submitted to for a while, till remedial laws and other remedial means shall bring relief. And so long as they said *that*, I gave them my sympathy. But when they say, “spread this system—spread it far and wide,” I cannot go another step with them. And it is not *I* that has changed, but *they*. When they say—“spread it—spread it over Kansas and Nebraska—spread it over the far West; annex Mexico, annex Cuba, annex Central America; make slavery a national Institution, make the compact of the Constitution carry it into all Territories, cover it with the national ægis, set it up as part of our great republican profession, stamp on our flag, and our shield, and our scutcheon, the emblem of human slavery;” I say,—no—never—God forbid!

In taking this stand, I am not influenced by the excitement of the day. I know there are causes for this excitement. There has been a deed done in the Senate chamber, so atrocious that I have no name for it. There is a border war upon Kansas, involving evil and mischief and wrong enough to stir the indignation of any just people. But if these things had *not* been

done, I should still take the ground I now take,—against the *extension* of the slave-system. It is a wrong to humanity ; it is ruin to the soil. If slavery covered this whole planet to-day, in less than a century, it would want another planet to sustain it. It tends to the demoralization of a people. It is in conflict with our free institutions, and with all the ideas of the age. “ We do not like it, Sirs ! ”—that is what we say to all its advocates ; that is the feeling at the bottom of our hearts. Humanity is every where rising against it. Did you ever consider the significance of those negro songs that are so much sung in these days ? The negro is singing his loves, his domestic affections, his sorrows into the ears of all the world ; and humanity listens with sympathy. Who would not listen ? Are they not the loves, the holy ties, the sacred sorrows of *men* ? Hallowed shall they be to me—sacred shall be the lot of those who feel them—no matter “ what complexion an Indian or an African sun may have burnt upon them.” I would advise the friends of slavery to pass statutes against the singing of these negro songs ; they are the strongest anti-slavery speeches I know. But it would be in vain. There is a tide rising in the world that will sweep away this system. The very Czar is meditating the freedom of the slaves in his empire. All the world is demanding the freedom of all men. With equal calmness and confidence I wait the result.

But it is time that I should close. I said I would return to the Old Tree ; but I have time to do so, only with words of invocation. Long may its brave old arms stretch themselves over this humble spot, in a free and happy land ! May the green sod beneath it, never be wet with fratricidal blood ! May happy companies gather around this old Elm Tree, for many

a year to come ! May our children, when we are gone, venerate its shadow as a holy memory : and may its interlacing branches be a symbol of union and concord, of friendship and affection, to the generations that shall follow us !

ON PATRIOTISM.

THE CONDITION, PROSPECTS, AND DUTIES

OF THE

AMERICAN PEOPLE.

A SERMON

DELIVERED ON FAST DAY AT CHURCH GREEN, BOSTON.

BY THE

REV. ORVILLE DEWEY.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

BOSTON:

TICKNOR AND FIELDS.

M DCCC LIX.

3

ON PATRIOTISM.

THE CONDITION, PROSPECTS, AND DUTIES

OF THE

AMERICAN PEOPLE.

A SERMON

DELIVERED ON FAST DAY AT CHURCH GREEN, BOSTON.

BY THE

REV. ORVILLE DEWEY.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

BOSTON:
TICKNOR AND FIELDS.

M DCCC LIX.

[The Congregation, at whose request this Sermon is printed, will observe that a part of it was omitted in the delivery.]

RIVERSIDE, CAMBRIDGE:
PRINTED BY H. O. HOUGHTON AND COMPANY.

DISCOURSE.

Psalm cxxii. 2, 7, and 8 verses. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem. Peace be within thy walls and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, peace be within thee.

And Matthew xxiii. 37. O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

I CANNOT help noticing, as I pass, this extraordinary language of Christ. Poor, neglected, unknown, a simple teacher by the way-sides of Judea, with no position in worldly eyes; yet if he had been a departing king, mourning over his people, he could not have spoken more loftily. Is there not some strange, unborrowed, supernal majesty in this appeal?

But it is not this of which I am to speak now, or for which I have drawn my text from sacred records, several hundred years apart. It is rather to point out the abiding naturalness and beauty of the sentiment of patriotism. For thus it is, that from age to age are forever echoing, words of every language, which proclaim how dear is men's native land. From David, who sung that ancient song, to him who wept over Jerusalem; and by all men

who have felt the touches of the gentlest or of the grandest humanity, thus have been repeated the words—songs, adjurations, or words of orators or historians, which proclaim the sacredness of country and home. Whether we can explain the sentiment or not, all men feel it, and nobody ever thought of defending it. There are sentiments indeed, that are more expansive. Our minds naturally range beyond all local boundaries. Science and philosophy are of no country. We belong to the world, it is true; and there is a humanity that is as wide as the world. But, that tract of earth which I call my native soil, my native clime: that spot where my childhood grew, where my parents have lived, and my kindred shall live after me; that is holy ground, set apart and severed from all the world beside; and framed, ay, its very hills and valleys, its slopes and river-banks, moulded and framed into some mysterious ties and sympathies with my very life and being. And I must be able to tell, what never yet was told—to tell what this inmost life and being *are*, before I can interpret all that is written on this tablet of home and country; before I can tell what home and country *mean*.

But one thing is plain and palpable to my mind, that when I say “my country,” I say what no amplification can add to; that I say more than any epithets can describe; that I speak of that which is a part of me, and I of it; that whatever touches it, touches me; and whoever assails it, assails me. It must be a dull man that feels neither pride nor shame for his native land. And if, from a disbanded nationality, I were wandering and fleeing, and the world should point the finger and say,

“aha! ye had not the force nor sense nor virtue to live, or keep your bond, or hold together;” that taunt would darken the very shadow and sorrow of exile.

And yet, though as I firmly believe, there never was a country which men have had more reason to love and cherish, than we have to love and cherish this country; yet here and among us, I think that the sentiment of patriotism is exposed to peculiar dangers. We have no uniting head, King or Queen, to whom the feeling of patriotic loyalty can attach itself. *Our* devotion is to an abstract Constitution; and though it is a noble kind of devotion if it can be sustained; yet if you were to cross to the father-land, you would be struck with the difference between our respect for the Constitution and the personal feeling which rises from a whole people to the fair majesty of England; to a crown which is at once the top of honor, and set round with all the gems of private virtue. Then again, there is nothing here to shield the head of the State, from every sort of violent and even scurrilous abuse. Every newly-chosen President seems to be set up, not as the image of the public order, but as a target to be shot at. The attack of course provokes defence; but the defence is apt to take the tone of partizanship rather than of true and unbiased respect. All this must hurt the sentiment of patriotism. If the head of the family, the judge on the bench, the minister at the altar, were the subject of this perpetual wrangling, the very institutions they preside over—home, law, religion—must suffer indignity and dishonor from such treatment. In a free State, it may be said, can anything be done to prevent it? That I will consider soon; at any rate I will consider

whether we should not try to do something. But once more ; our freedom, with the unchecked opportunity it offers for the acquisition of gains, luxuries, comforts, and for the indulgence of all sorts of private opinions and preferences, is liable to run out into an individualism, a thinking and caring of each one only for himself, and a neglect of our political duties, which are in direct antagonism with the love of country. There is a class of persons in this country, and I fear it is an increasing class, who, disgusted with politics, or fastidiously averse from free mingling with the people, or engrossed with business, are shrinking from their duties as citizens ; who refuse to take office, avoid as much as they can every species of service to the public, even that of sitting on juries, and who neglect to deposit their ballot at the polls. In fact, there is a disintegration of society here, that is hostile not only to patriotic, but even to fixed party sentiments.

I have said thus much in general, with the view to open to you the subject on which I propose to address you this morning : and that is, our country, the love of our country, and the circumstances in our condition that are liable to weaken that great patriotic bond. I shall discuss a variety of questions ; but they will have at least this unity ; every question will come to this point, the love of our country, the right *appreciation* of it, the willing service which patriotism demands to be rendered to it ; nay, the *filial* consideration and loyalty with which we ought to speak of it.

And first, let me say a word, of a reckless habit which we have, of *speaking* about the country. It may be regarded as a small matter—speech, the talk of the street,

the license of debate, in caucus or Congress—but I cannot think it so. Speech is the birth of opinion ; and opinion is the womb of the unborn future. What we think and say, the coming generation are likely enough to do. Idle talk may resolve itself into dreadful fact. Let all men among us, talk as some men do ; and a hurricane might pass over the land with less harm, than that idle or angry breath.

Nay, there are those who talk, as if they did not care how soon the worst came to pass. Disgusted with what they call the popular tendencies ; disgusted with the upheaving of the popular mass, which they have never tried to direct or control ; disgusted with the insubordination and irreverence of the young ; disgusted altogether with our politics, they say—I have *heard* them say, “let the worst come ; the sooner the better ; the worse the better !” Now I confess that I can never hear this kind of talk, or anything approaching to it, without great pain. It discourages and saddens me. It discourages everybody. It is not good to hear. It is not good to think or say. I know that there is often a more grave and considerate talking, about popular derelictions and public corruption ; and though I cannot altogether gainsay the justice of it, I must say it seems to me there is too much of it—such as it is. Let us *do* something and not always talk. Or if we must talk, let it be to inquire what we can do. But it is too often cold, scornful, sarcastic, bitter talk that I hear. If it were more painful, there would be less of it. I sat by a couple of gentlemen lately, who were speaking at length, of bribery and corruption in Congress. I could not help saying, “this talk always

makes me sick." So said one of them, "it makes me sick." But it went on. It always goes on. Fault finding is always eloquent; and it is easy. If the object were to inquire how we can correct our own, or our people's errors, it were profitable. But if it be only to vent our spleen, it is perilous. We may say of it, in relation to our country, what Burns says in another connection, "it petrifies the feeling."

And is it not a very strange thing? Was the like ever seen before; a people so recklessly criticizing itself; smiting the government, the country, and the country's hope, in one suicidal blow? This *passes* the ordinary limits of party animosity. Is there anything like it in England or France? Was there in old Rome? till its disastrous and declining days came, and seemed to justify the despair of Cicero, and the satire of Tacitus. But in its prosperous days were such words ever spoken? Why, I have heard a man standing in the high Senate of these United States—I have heard a senator say, "The president, and his cabinet, and both houses of congress, ought to be taken and pitched into the Potomac." If he had said such a thing in old Rome, he would himself have been pitched into the Tiber, and would have deserved it. And lately, in a speech in Congress, I hear the president called a "brigand!"

I take it upon me to rebuke such mad speaking. It should not have been possible to say or to hear such things in the Capitol. The man who undertook to say them, should have been drowned in hisses if it had been in a popular assembly, or if in the Senate, he should have been withered by its awful frown. I do not deny that

there should be a strict and solemn inquisition into the ways of the government and of the nation ; but I do deny that such indecent and abusive language should be used. I will not admit that it is right ever to speak thus of our country, or its government. This sublime nationality ; this embodied life of thirty millions of human souls ; this gathering under the awful wings of Providence, of six millions of families ; this majestic Rule that presides over them ; this struggling welfare and sorrow and hope of a great people, all bound up in the country's prosperity and progress ; this whole stupendous evolution of the fortunes of humanity, is it to be treated as lightly as if it were a game of football, or as angrily, with as much passion and despite, and rash exclamation of oaths or curses, as if it were a pugilistic fight ? How different was the spirit, how reverent, protective, and tender, with which Jesus looked upon his people ! And, indeed, what commanding dignity appears in his address to it ! And how evenly and perfectly was the balance held in him, between indignation and love ! The government was in bad hands enough ; and he was disowned, and rejected, and persecuted ; the Pharisees, the rulers, the Sanhedrim would not know him ; and yet sadly and indignantly as he speaks of all the wrong and evil there was in high places—yet no reckless satire or scorn ever fell from his lips ; but his great and loving heart burst out in melting expostulation, saying, “ O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets and stonest them that are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not ! ”

But the true question, I may be told, were, whether the country and government deserve to be spoken of with satire and scorn. This question concerns two very different things—the country and the government—and I shall treat of them separately.

Does the government deserve it? Is it as bad as it is often said to be? Has it become more corrupt than it was in former days? Has it declined from its pristine integrity? It may be true; I am afraid it is true; but it is to be remembered that our saying so does not prove it. Just as hard things have been said all along, of all the administrations, after the first; and even that, even Washington's, did not escape the most bitter reproaches. But just as hard, nay, harder things, were said of Jefferson and John Adams, and Madison and Monroe. Party animosity raged even more fiercely then, than it does now.

I have had, for my part, some salutary experience upon this matter. I remember the time when I was taught by those around me, to regard Thomas Jefferson as the basest and most dissolute and unprincipled of men. And I do not doubt that there are some here, who could tell me, that John Adams was treated with scarcely more decorum. Well, I have lived to see these two men in their old age, treating one another with respectful consideration, writing amiable and friendly letters to one another; and I have lived to see the time when they died on the same day—on that memorable fourth of July; and then I heard the voice of loud lament and eulogy bursting forth from the whole country; from all parties alike. It was a great lesson to me; and I resolved that I would never listen to the words of party clamor any more. And how is it

now, with Webster, and Clay, and Calhoun! Why, it is coming to be generally admitted, even by their opponents, that however they may have erred, however they may have acted under biases and prejudices, they loved their country; and that in the circumstances in which they were placed, they did what they thought was right. Can any more be said of the integrity of statesmen than this? And if there be men now standing high among us—I say not this or that man—but if there be *any* who may meet with a similar reversal of the popular or party award, from the calm judgment of posterity, nay, and are likely enough, judging from the past, to do so, ought it not to stir a sacred caution in our minds, how we treat them? Doubtless a government may grow more and more corrupt. Doubtless there are found, from time to time, in seats of power, bad men and bad magistrates. But it must be a sad thing, it must be a terrible thing, for us on mere party and mistaken biases, to admit that the whole government of the country is sinking deeper and deeper in corruption every year. Neither Statesmen, nor any other men, can fairly be expected to be better than we account them to be. This constant depreciating and vilifying of the government, by one half of the people, tends to bring about the very state of things we lament over, and we may help to verify in misery and disgrace, the very prophecy of our haste and wrath.

I admit that in some respects, there is a descent from the dignity and perhaps virtue of former days. It is constantly said, that an inferior class of men is chosen to public office; and I will not deny it. Every nation perhaps, has its golden age; or what seems to be such.

In the early times of the Republic, the natural anxiety of the people, called the highest men into the public service. We have grown easy and careless. But this is not all. The representative principle was not at once developed here in its full force; or rather it was not abused, as it is now. For a long time there was a class of men, regarded as superior persons, to whom the people naturally looked as their leaders and legislators. That natural aristocracy is now to a certain extent disowned; and the candidate for office is preferred perhaps, because he is *not* of that class. It is an unfortunate reaction. Then too, men of culture and refinement, are more and more shrinking and retiring from public life. It is an unfortunate tendency. The consequence of all this, is seen in a deterioration of manners, in our high places. We hear of rude and abusive personalities in debate, nay, of actual combats and blows in the halls of Congress; of blows more wounding to the public heart, even than to the unworthy combatants. That rule in Congressional speeches which is called the "one hour rule," however necessary it may have been, and however just and reasonable, has undoubtedly had the effect to lower the dignity of debate. Formerly, a few leading members discussed great questions. Now, a much larger class are brought upon the floor; and the manners are worse. Then again, terrible questions are now brought forward, questions about the public lands, about annexation of territory, about slavery, which try the integrity, the virtue, the composure, the self-possession of public men, more than they were tried in former days. All this, I trust, is transitional, and will pass away. It does not prove to me that the natural

tendency of free suffrage and a free Constitution, under fair conditions, is to carry a government downward.

But the more serious question is about the moral progress or deterioration of the whole country. *Government* is, to the people, a mystery. The eye of the popular conscience is not fairly opened to it. Hence it comes to pass that things are abetted in public, which would not be tolerated in private life. This separation between political and personal morality, which is doing so much mischief all over the world, it is to be hoped is temporary here, and will be searched into and stigmatized and stamped with utter reprobation, by a more enlightened public opinion. Men, I trust, will come to look at the persons who administer public affairs, as keenly as they investigate the conduct of bank or railroad directors, nay, and will judge and act as stockholders, in the great national interest, demanding, irrespective of party biases,—demanding, I say, probity in the one as much as in the other, resolving to elect no man to public affairs who is not an honest and good man.

But the question about the *national* character is dis-embarrassed from these considerations ; and it cuts deeper. It is a momentous question certainly, and demands the gravest and most anxious study. It is a question for ourselves. It matters little comparatively what others say of us, though they are saying much on the other side, at the present moment. Nor is this surprising ; for the example of universal suffrage and of popular rule, which we have set up here, must of course be subjected to the severest scrutiny. Does it *work* well? is the question.

Theories are nothing ; does it work well ? And there is a party in England which maintains that it does not. They say that everything is running down here.

Is it true ? *Are* we becoming a more unprincipled, vicious, dissolute people ? Are we less honest, less temperate, less benevolent, less reverent, less pure in manners and morals, than our predecessors were half a century ago ? Has our freedom run out into general license ? Or is there to be seen in the country at large, any tendency of the kind ?

This is not the place to say how humble is the estimate which every right-minded people must form of its virtues ; or how deep is the sense, which every conscientious and thoughtful man must entertain of the national defects ; let the nation be which it will, American or French or English. Next to the burden which his own faults lay upon such a man, I believe, is the sad feeling he has, in contemplating the too common depravity and degradation around him, the baseness in high places and low, the drunkenness and debauchery, the sins, secret and open, which cover all the world with darkness, and fill it with tears. This is doubtless a wise direction of men's thoughts, whether in this country or any other country ; whether for a Fast Day or any other day. And I will not leave it to be inferred, from anything I shall say, that I am insensible to this humbling and painful contemplation of our moral condition. Before a righteous conscience let every people bow low ; before accusers speaking in the interest of king-ship and aristocracy, and trying to discredit free governments, it must assume a different attitude.

And the question here, let it be observed, is not how bad we are, but whether we are regularly and constantly growing worse ; whether we are going down in national character ; and I deliberately say, I do not believe it ; I do not admit any such thing. Nay, it is rather observable, that the men who are wont to speak the most bitterly of their country—I mean the ultra-reformers, the abolitionists, for instance, and come-outers of all sorts—do nevertheless comfort themselves with the belief, that their labors have not been in vain ; that there is a better tone of sentiment and a better state of morals among us, than there was twenty years ago.

But I do not deny that there are some bad indications, explicable, I think, however, on other grounds than that of a general tendency and sweep downwards. In the moral condition of a people, there will always be oscillations. There are local circumstances, affecting moral conduct ; there are great movements of society ; there are reactions ; all writers on statistics know this, and the moral critic is bound to consider it. Thus, in the education of the young, obedience fails to be enforced among us, to an extent positively alarming ; but I believe that it is a reaction from the old parental rigor ; and I think I already see indications of return to wholesome discipline. Then again, we have heard much of social disorders ; of the bowie-knife and lynch-law on our Western border. This state of things is evidently owing to circumstances ; and, what is especially to be observed, this border line of semi-civilized life, instead of coming this way, as it should, according to the argument of deterioration, is constantly retreating. So in our

cities, we have seen violence and sad misrule, enough to furnish a loud argument against us on the other side of the water, and loud admonition to ourselves. The truth is, we have been slowly learning, how, under our popular system, to govern cities. And I think we are solving the problem. And again I say it is observable that the disturbance is retiring; it is passing, so to say, along down our coast cities; and in one after another it is controlled. We had mobs in Boston, New Bedford, Providence, New York. We have them no more. Disorders still prevail in Philadelphia, especially among the fire-engine companies—organizations which I hope will ere long be entirely supplanted by the use of steam-engines—and in Baltimore, from political causes. The truth is, and we are finding it out, that nothing but military force will hold in check the lower populace of our cities. With regard to misrule, to corruption in our city governments, the only remedy lies in agencies far more difficult to be called forth. For until the superior classes in our cities, the men of wealth and education, will consent to take the part which they ought to take, in our elections and in our municipal affairs, there *will* be misrule and corruption, injuring the public interest, and shaming all good men. The evil is growing so monstrous, that I cannot help believing, it will drive us upon the obvious remedy. Then once more, it is said that crime is increasing in this country faster than population. Is it strange that it should do so? Does it fairly indicate the general character of our people, when it is well known that so much of it is imported from foreign countries? Of the criminals convicted in our

Courts,—a large proportion come from abroad. In some instances, we are told, that the very penitentiaries and almshouses of the continent of Europe, have been emptied of their miserable tenants, to be shipped off to America. More than nine tenths of the paupers and beggars in our cities come from the Old World. Everybody knows how rare it is, to meet with a native American mendicant.

There is altogether a mode of reasoning about this matter, or rather a way of representing things, that is unfair and unjust. The foreign journals get hold of here and there a fact, or of a gossiping story told by some traveller, and forthwith set it up as a placard against a whole people. And they talk too, of mobs and popular outbreaks here. Have they none, in the cities of Europe? There has not been, I confidently say, since we have been a nation, such a stable and undisturbed order of society in the world, as our own. They say tauntingly, “here is a young people, a people in the flush of its morning, a people that ought to be in a condition of pristine virtue and innocence, and yet so full of vices and crimes, so “full of sores and ulcers,” that its friends, as they look at it, must hang their heads in shame. The case is *not* so. Society here is primarily an offshoot from society in Europe, in its average condition. And then in later days, what shoals of the base and abandoned, have been floated to this country from foreign shores! And what multitudes of ignorant and miserable paupers from abroad, have been cast upon our hands, employing, as we well know, all the benevolent energies of our cities! I think we deserve some better return than taunts for our care of them.

It is indeed a very extraordinary condition of things. No people in the world, was ever before subjected to such a trial. Ah! it is very easy to stand with folded hands on the opposite shore, and say, "what a bad plight you are in!"

As to the absolute question of our growing better or worse, there are many things to be considered. The liberalizing and enlightening of a people, have their perils; we may welcome the general result, and yet look with anxiety at some of the processes and steps. The growth of wealth and luxury, is still more perilous; but some extravagance in living, and some foolish fashions—late hours and lavish entertainments, though economically bad, and bad for health, may not be so bad as the case-hardened rigor of the old Puritan time, the stern face which it wore toward all the gayeties and pleasures of life, the mingled hypocrisy and fear which it branded into the youthful mind. The notion that the more miserable a man *is*, and *feels*, and *looks*, the better man he is; and the more happy and gay, the worse—this wrong to Providence, this base crouching under its mighty dome of light and blessing—we may well be thankful that it is passing away. Changes which to the strict and conservative eye wear a bad aspect, may not be for the worse. There is more liberality with regard to amusements; but certainly the festal habits of our people have improved. There are not so many brutal fights on public days, as there were forty years ago; there is not so much drunkenness at feasts, or town meetings, or military parades; there is not so much profane swearing. In fact, it is capable of demonstration, I believe, that fifty or eighty years ago, under the incrusta-

tions of the old Puritanism, viler streams of intemperance and licentiousness, were stealing through our New England society, than can be found now.

In short, I say that society, in its whole spirit, tone, and character, is improved. There is less intolerance, whether religious, political, or social, than there was half a century ago. New views, whether with regard to the rights of men, or the sphere of woman, or the improvement of society, receive a more hospitable entertainment than they did then. Slander, running its gossiping round, leaving its poisonous slaver wherever it winds ; I believe there is less of it than there was. People have books, reviews, newspapers, lectures, concerts to occupy them ; and the neighbor's character oftener escapes. And in business, that system of preference-credits, that dishonorable evasion of fair and open responsibility ; I ask you, if it is not in greater discredit, than it was twenty years ago. And in fine, I put it to any discerning and thoughtful man, who has reached middle life, whether he does not find society more just, tolerant, frank, and fearless, little enough as there is of all this, than it was twenty years ago.

My subject in this discourse, is the love of country. We cannot love our country as a country should be loved, but it must be—I hope it will not be thought a weakness to say—with something of reverence and tenderness, with something of enthusiasm and pride for it ; and we cannot hear it recklessly vilified or wrongfully accused, without remonstrance. It is to these points therefore that I have now been speaking.

In the same patriotic interest I am tempted to add a word or two on another point.

In the all-criticizing spirit of the time, there is a sort of incredible talk among us about national failure, about the sundering of the national bond, about the disuniting of these States ; these Federal States as we call them. The possibility of using such language arises in part, I think, from our calling them Federal States,—deriving our notion, or our nomenclature at least, from the old Colonial time. We are *not* confederated States as, till recently, the Swiss Cantons were. We are not a league, but a nation. We are one nation, as much as any other nation is. And what other nation in its palmy day, ever talked of disunion, as some among us do. “Dis—*what?*”—I could imagine a sensible man to say, who heard the word for the first time, and fancied he did not rightly hear—“disaffection, I can understand, distrust, disorder, but *disunion?* You might as well talk of a disunion of the Alleghany mountains from one another. You might as well talk of the disunion of the Mississippi River from itself.” Nay, and these are not only illustrations, but facts. Nature has made this North American empire *morally* indissoluble. How are you to cut the Mississippi River in two, giving the southern half to one nation and the northern half to another?—the southern dictating on what terms the northern should pass through. And our railroads fast engirdling the whole empire, and our common interest and honor, and our patriotic memories, growing more venerable as they grow older, constantly bind us more strongly together. To be sure, I do not know what *may be* in the future ; but for the present time I hold it to be but patriotic policy and decency, to shut our ears against that miserable, paltry, party word,

disunion—spawn of factious discontent, and reckless freedom.

But do not the Southern States, from time to time, threaten to break off and go out of the Union? *Not* the southern *States*; only *one*, and that only *once*. For the rest, *some men* at the South talk in this wild fashion; that is all. But I do not deny that this is enough, and more than enough. I do not deny that the difficulty to which I now refer is serious enough. But is it insuperable? It is the only question that threatens the national integrity. Is there no solution for it but a violent and bloody one?

I cannot, and I do not believe it. But I confess that no shadow of mystery, that ever hung over the fairest fortunes of the human race, has seemed to me darker than this. Why it is, that the Almighty Providence has permitted this root of bitterness to be planted in the soil of our Republic, to trouble the grandest political experiment that ever was made in human affairs, no mortal eye can see! It may be that since, in this fair domain and under this large freedom—since, I say, prosperity, wealth, and luxury were to start forth on such a career as they never ran before, one thing was permitted that should try men's souls; that should humble our pride, that should task our patience, our calmness, our forbearance, our love of country to the utmost.

Would to God that we could see it in this light, instead of throwing upon this debatable ground the burning coals of strife! Instead of doing all that we can to provoke and vilify, and estrange one another, would that we could sit down together as brethren, and as in the pres-

ence of God, and sincerely and solemnly ask ; what we can do?—what we ought to do ? What is our duty ? What is right ? What is best for all ? Here is a people planted upon our territory ; a portion of the human race ; inferior to ourselves, if you please, but human ; and placed here without any fault of our own ; nay, placed here against the remonstrances of our fathers ; nay, more, so far as we are concerned, put, by an inscrutable Providence, into our hands ; and now what is our duty to them ? What ought a just people to do for them ? What ought a paternal and Christian government to do ?

What *ought* we to do, I say ; for there *is* a question of *the right*, which is above every other question. I grieve to hear any high-minded man, swayed by party biases, speak lightly of this highest law. Without it, we are not men, but brutes. No men, nor nations can truly respect themselves, unless they bow in reverence before this sublime authority. What is the canonized virtue of ages ; what do we venerate in heroes and martyrs ; what is it, without which there is left no worth nor dignity in the world, but *the right* ? Nations may rise and prosper ; generations may sweep over the earth, and eloquent histories be written of them ; planets might roll, and stars wheel round their mighty centres—they are but dust and ashes, unless the law of the *everlasting right* reigns over them !

What, then, is it right for us to do with regard to this African people ? Emancipate them at once ; turn them adrift from our care, and take off the hand of restraint ; let them be free as ourselves ; free to work or to be idle

as they please, free to roam hither and thither as they will, free to vote or to bear arms like other freemen? *I* do not say so. I may be wrong, but that is not my opinion. Certainly there is a profound conviction to the contrary, among the Southern people.

What is the right then? I answer, it is to consider and care for these people, so strangely and sadly intrusted to us; to consider and care for them as *men*. It is to educate, instruct, Christianize them. Why, we send missions to the farthest heathen for that. It is to pass laws for the gradual amelioration of their condition. It is ultimately to emancipate them. With regard to the steps, I cannot go into detail. The problem will be one of immense difficulty and complication, far greater than that which was involved in the treatment of the serfs in the Middle Ages.

But this at least we can do. We can set up *the right* to be the sovereign law in this whole proceeding. There is always a conflict, more or less, between natural right and municipal regulation. In the case of Slavery, that conflict is carried to the extremest point of contradiction. It is in vain to deny it. The slave has a perfect right, if he can, to run away. I never saw a man, North or South, who denied it. But the municipal law steps in and stops him. It is a grievous solecism; it is a sad conflict between a man's rights and society's rights. But I cannot deny that society has a right to restrain actions, otherwise right, naturally right, which tend to its own destruction. I have a natural right to eat and drink, and to buy and sell what I will—alcohol, or poison, or gunpowder—yet society claims the right, by license-laws, to restrain me.

But still there is a Supreme Law which says that that contrariety shall be lessened, as fast as the general welfare and safety will permit. And to hold that extremest contradiction to natural right which slavery presents—to hold it, I say, fast clenched ; to repel the very idea that it ought to be lessened or loosened in any way ; to say that it is right and always shall be, to buy and sell men and their posterity after them forever ; and to demand that the common and supreme Government of the land shall, by its action, avouch this local and municipal bond to be altogether right, shall adopt, espouse, recognize it, shall enact into its laws, legitimate in its territories, this grand and world-condemned wrong to humanity ; this is what we never can consent to.

Alas ! the time was, when the South mainly agreed with us in this ; when it admitted that slavery was an evil, and in its origin a wrong, which must be corrected in due time. But it has been goaded by the violence of our disputes, into an opposite position. Is it not possible that it should take a step backward ; while we on our part, forsake the attitude of sectional antagonism, except in *opinion*, which we cannot help ; and that we should all agree, that slavery should be left just where it is ; to be dealt with by those who alone have the charge and the responsibility ; just as if the Southern people were a foreign nation ; our common, our general government, doing nothing for it, nor against it, but simply letting it alone ; simply keeping the bond of the Constitution ; no more discussing it in Congress, than if it were Russian serfdom ; making no fugitive slave-laws, nor any other laws about it ; but simply, I repeat, letting it alone. If the

people of the South could consent to that, ceasing to be propagandists of their system, it would be doubtless a concession of municipal or pecuniary claim on their part, to moral principle ; but, would it not be a noble concession ? Why, the whole progress of justice and freedom in the world has involved precisely that concession. Arbitrary kingships, aristocracies, customs, laws, rights of possession, have always been giving way to the moral claim. The ordinance of '87 was precisely such a concession. Upon no other principle was slavery prohibited from going into the Northwest Territory. And when we at the North, refuse to open the New Territories to that system, it is, in my mind, mainly upon the same ground. If the slaves were ordinary property, if they were but horses or oxen, we should think it monstrous to say to their owners, " You shall not take them there." It is because they are men, because their presence there would injure the public interest—would injure the free white laborer ; because, in short, it is a thing that ought to be repressed, not extended, that we insist upon that concession. Would it not be an honor to the Southern men to make it ? It would be returning to the ground with regard to this institution, which their fathers held. It would be to throw off from their shoulders, the responsibility for a system which they did not create, but have inherited. Now, alas ! they assume and avouch it to be their own, and to be right and good. The moral sentiments of the world are *against* that stand. Can they hold it ?

I have thus far been engaged in the discussion of some questions concerning the treatment of our country, con-

cerning its moral condition, and the one great danger to it. And here, perhaps, I ought to stop; but I cannot leave the subject, without undertaking to say something of what a true patriotism demands of us; what of duty, fealty, and affection.

I must detain you with one preliminary remark, which goes through the whole subject. It is this; and I would emphasize it: *Universal civilized modern society is entering upon a political condition, which devolves an entirely new charge and responsibility upon citizenship.* Under absolute rule the subject had little to do with regard to government, but to submit to what was ordained for him. There was no pulpit, nor press, nor caucus, nor ballot that could fairly speak out; or that could exert any efficient influence upon public affairs. The popular conscience, instead of being educated to a sense of duty to the common weal, was crushed down by political injustice and oppression. Indeed, the spectacle of selfishness, seated on the throne and ruling in the court, too often taught the people only to be selfish,—to hoard their property or to tie it up in entails, and to pursue their pleasures, with little sense of what they owed to the country. The Grecian and Roman republics did, indeed, during their brief continuance, develope a vigorous love of country, but scarcely inculcated any duty to it, beyond that of fighting its battles.

Now, it is not to be so, it must not be so, in our modern free States, if they are to work out any happy condition or high destiny. *We* are to make and keep and guard the State; we, the people, are to do it, by personal care and fidelity. The machinery of the public

order will not roll on smoothly and safely without our intervention ; nay, we *are* the machinery. The government cannot go on prosperously without us, we standing aloof and looking on ; nay, we *are* the government !

Here it is, I conceive, that our modern free communities have fallen into an immense and perilous mistake. We have inherited our ideas of citizenship from former times and from a different order of society ; and they do not apply to our condition. Always and everywhere the more liberty there is, the more duties there are to be done. All along on the line of progression, from animal instinct or from the lowest point of barbarism, up to the highest intellectual power and freedom, it will be found that more and more depends upon the individual ; that more and more trusts are committed to him. The whole framework of government and society, becomes more and more complicated. The King of Dahomey, or the Emperor of China, has but few laws ; and the people have nothing to do but to obey them. We make the laws, multiply them, change them, execute them. No man stands alone, or can rightly stand apart. Every citizen is brought into immediate relations with the welfare of the State. Every citizen has duties to perform to the country. And every instrumentality, organ, and office, that has power to influence the public welfare, should be subject to the same patriotic obligation.

It should be recognized, first, in our schools and colleges. There should be taught in them, as a distinct branch of education, the duties of citizenship. In our technical views of what constitutes education, this practical and pressing interest has been strangely overlooked.

I am told that the schools of semi-barbarous Japan are ahead of us in this respect ; that the children there are instructed in the actual duties of coming life. We want, in our schools, a Political Class-Book, more comprehensive and simple, too, than any I know of,—though an excellent work of the kind was written by Mr. William Sullivan, of this city,—a book that should instruct youth in the nature of our government, in the duties of citizens, of voters, jurors, magistrates, and legislators ; in the morals of politics and parties, in the principles upon which the vote should be given ; how much should be conceded to party organization, and what should never be conceded to it. And if there were a plain chapter or two on Logic, I think it would be well,—teaching the young something about the principles of right reasoning,—that of which our people know less than of almost anything else ; our politics, our caucuses, our newspapers, are about as full of one-sided and fallacious reasonings as they can hold.

Next, the pulpit owes a duty to the country. We are constantly complaining that political morality is at a low ebb, and is sinking every day, lower and lower. What duty of the pulpit is plainer, than to speak of immorality, and especially of that which cuts most directly and deeply into the heart of the common welfare, political immorality ? This wretched and ruinous distinction between public and private virtue, between political and personal integrity ; this permitting and expecting men in official stations, to act on principles that would dishonor them in trade and at home ; this giving all fealty to party and none to the country ; *whose*

duty is it to strike at this stupendous demoralization, if it is not that of the preacher? If, as a trustee of private funds, a man cannot cheat or embezzle without a black mark being set upon him, without being driven out from the society of all honest and honorable men; shall a public trust be violated, a trust confided to a man by his fellow-citizens, a trusteeship for the whole country and for unborn generations; shall it be violated and nothing be said of it, but that it is just what might be expected? Shall this huge dereliction be visited only with a sneer; and that, more at the miserable state of the country, than at the men who dishonor it?

The sacredness of every political trust; the *awfulness* of government—I speak advisedly; the solemn significance, the binding and religious obligation of the oath, with which a man swears that he will “well and truly” serve his country; what holy bond can be more properly insisted on, in the pulpit, than this? No “sanctitude of kings” ought to be more venerable than the magistracy of a free State. No holy conclave ought to be more sober and conscientious than a congress of men, chosen and set and bound, to think and act for the welfare of a great people.

And why shall not the pulpit speak of and for the country, for the common weal? Why shall it not speak great and solemn words for patriotic duty, for sobriety and thoughtfulness, and moderation, and mutual love? Why shall it not plead for the country? I cannot help thinking that if all the pulpits in the land, were to do their duty in this respect, the result would be marked and visible; and we should not have all political action dese-

crated as it now, too often, is, cast out under the trampling feet of party violence and recklessness, a game for the adroit, a butt for satire, rather than a bond for conscience and honor. If the clergy want texts they may find enough of them, in David and Isaiah, and in the books of the New Testament.

The relation of the Press, to the country is sufficiently recognized; and the only question is, about the use it shall make of its acknowledged and immense power. I am glad that it is free; and no abuse of which it is capable would seem to me so odious as a government censorship; as the ignominious bondage which is now imposed upon the Press in France. Where there is not free debate of every kind—free talk in the streets, free speech in public, free printing everywhere—there is no political freedom.

Still I could wish that the press might consider *for itself*, what restrictions patriotism, justice, and honorable fair play, should lay upon it. A man should not feel more at liberty to put forth rash, hasty, and inconsiderate words, because he is an editor, cloaked in his closet, but less, incomparably less. The private man speaks to his neighbor; the editor of a newspaper, to thousands.

I have observed with pleasure, that two or three Conventions of Editors have been lately held in the country. I hope there will be more of them. Why should not discussions be entertained in such Conventions, on the principles upon which the Press should be conducted—on Editorial duties and rights, and inter-editorial courtesy and forbearance? The clergy meet together to consider their duty and work: so do teachers of youth.

Why might not editors? Their position makes them teachers and guides to the people. And why, in fact, should there not be in our system of education, a distinct department of preparation for the editor's chair, as well as for the law, or medicine or theology?

It is every man's interest and duty, as far as possible, to hold just, large, well-proportioned views of things. Why should a man be willing to be one-sided, to be given over to partial and party views of subjects, because he is an editor? Are we never to see in party prints any fair admission of what is right on the other side? And there is another thing still more vital to the editorial conscience and honor. There is a line which should never be crossed without sacred caution: it is the line beyond which lies the domain of private character. I do not mean of the private life only, but of a man's essential claims to rectitude of purpose. Personalities seldom serve any good end; they subserve many bad passions. Measures may be freely and roughly handled; motives may not. And the contest here is too unequal for honorable assault—except in very extreme cases. The man who commands a battery, should beware, for his honor, how he opens it upon an unarmed man. For the single man against such a force, *is* virtually unarmed. He has no fair chance. He cannot answer. He does not answer; except in words, which if they become common, will alike degrade the press, and destroy its power—“Oh! it isn't worth noticing; it is only a newspaper!”

A free State, I repeat, unlike a despotism, must engage the services of all its citizens, in their appropriate duties. A representative system requires of every man the vote.

Trial by jury, demands that every man should sit on the jury, when he is summoned to that service. And to fill a public office, when the expressed wish of the citizens designate the man, is scarcely short of an obligation. Our compact is, thus to serve one another, in the great interests of the Commonwealth. Travellers in this country have made it a reproach against us, that we are all engaged in politics. We *ought* to be engaged in them; not as petty politicians, but as men observant and thoughtful, and anxious for the common weal. Mr. Wordsworth, the great English poet, once said to an American visitor, with whom he had talked a long time on the English and American systems—"I am chiefly known to the world as a poet; but I think that during my whole life, I have given ten hours' thought to politics for one to poetry." The visitor said in reply, "I am not surprised at that; for the spirit of your poetry is the spirit of humanity; and the grandest visible form of human interests, is politics."

Was he not right? And do not the most influential men and the highest minds among us, owe an especial duty to the country? There are not a few men among us who seem to me strangely insensible to this duty. There are respectable persons that I hear say, and who seem to pride themselves in saying, that "they care nothing about politics." Business men in our cities avoid as much as they can, sitting on juries; preferring to pay a fine for neglect. There is a conservatism among the more wealthy and cultivated classes, that looks with cold disdain or strange timidity upon those popular elements, that are working out the common weal or woe. Instead of stepping forward and taking their proper place, they

shrink into corners. This timidity of conservatism is in Anglo-Saxon men the strangest thing ! Let the popular wave arise, and they flee before it, like sheep before a pack of wolves. Let municipal questions agitate the people, and violence be threatened ; and they turn back and leave it for those who *will*, to take the lead. They say that the public interests, nay and the very rights of property, are in peril ; and they do nothing but submit. Is there no English hardihood left among us for emergencies like these ? Is the fairest chance for self-government and national freedom, ever accorded to men, to be given over to pure faint-heartedness or scorn ?

I would not, however, be thought to speak with unreasonable severity of these doubts and fears of conservatism. I would not make a bugbear of this distrust. I feel it in a degree myself ; every thinking man feels it. And it is not peculiar to us in this country. In every country thoughtful men feel it. In France, nay in England, do they not feel it ? Do they not entertain the question, whether the present order of things will hold ; whether changes, whether revolutions may not come ? But this is what I say. Is this distrust to be made an argument for deserting the post of duty, for giving up the cause of the country ?

It is against this faint-heartedness that I contend ; and I hope I may be pardoned for doing so pointedly and earnestly. I would use no unbecoming adjuration, but I would say, if it were proper for me to say, to all conservative doubters—for the sake of everything momentous and holy, Sirs, arouse you to your duties. Slavery excepted, I know of nothing more ominous for the country than

your own position in it. Why, I have been told that a distinguished foreigner who has spent a year or two among us, says he has hardly met a man in the higher society, who did not look with entire distrust to our future. If it be so, I will tell you whom he has met. He has met *you*, the ultra-conservative men of the country. He could never have heard anything like this, from the great body of our intelligent people. But if the danger were *real*, I can tell you what would do more than anything else to avert it. Let thirty men that I could name in each of our cities, and a hundred in each State, go freely into the popular assemblies; let them speak there; let them speak wisely, manfully, kindly, liberally, and generously—with a heart full and warm for their brother-men and for the common country; and I believe the effect would be incalculable.

Do you say it would be troublesome to vote and serve on juries, and to go and speak in popular assemblies? But *what* duty is *not* sometimes troublesome? To rear a family; to provide for it, to build up an estate, is troublesome. The student's, the lawyer's, the physician's life has its troubles, its disagreeable things to do. The soldier must stand sentinel, stand in the trenches, stand in the imminent deadly breach; and ill should we think of him, if he lay in his luxurious tent when hardship and danger demanded him. And are the duties that we owe to the whole embodied life of the Republic, to be exempted from the obligation that presses everywhere else? No, I firmly say it; we must march up to the breach when duty or danger to our country calls; we, in the whole country, we, in cities. All the respectability, influence,

wealth, learning, culture in our cities, should be seen at the polls, and often at the primary meetings. If in timidity, in cowardice, in fastidiousness or scorn, they stand back and give place to ignorance, brutality, and violence, whose then will the fault be, if the lower elements get uppermost? Troublesome, indeed! Let me tell you that something more troublesome will come; ay, trouble that we think little of now, if we neglect to guard the house. Troublesome, forsooth! Where are the courage and manliness and self-sacrifice of honest and honorable men? For I say, if we could truly understand it, that amidst ease, and abundance, and luxury, there is as much self-sacrifice required to keep all right and safe, as there is in scenes of revolution and blood. We *know*, that if every man in this country will do his duty, all will go well. And of whom may we demand that they do their duty, if not of those who have, or conceive that they have, the most at stake? And what if such a man were stricken down, by popular violence—stricken down at the polls—ay, murdered, martyred! It would be a glorious martyrdom. It would do more to appall the lawless and arouse the negligent, than a whole life could do.

But, says some learned or fastidious and delicate gentleman, "what can I do in the primary assemblies? They wont hear me." There it is again—that mistimed timidity or morbid self-esteem. But I say they *will* hear. They want to hear from those whom they involuntarily respect as men of wealth, education, and influence. And they must hear from them. Republics must be brotherhoods. Free communities, free cities cannot go on well, if the most influential persons in them retire in disgust

and disdain from all participation in their affairs. The English aristocracy are beginning to feel this ; they are learning that *Ἀριστοί*—the best—must mean something more than fashionable idlers or mere cultivators of their estates ; and they are more and more mingling with the people, at least in their social, municipal and political affairs and interests. They are living more for the public and for the common weal, than they once did. Nothing else can justify their position, in an intelligent and increasingly free community. And nothing else can make any similar position right, in a free country. This is the price that a guarded liberty must pay : a guarded liberty I say, and none other can be kept, or be long worth keeping. This is the price, I believe, and therefore I insist upon it—this care, this common interest, this intervention in affairs, of the highest men among us, this friendly and fraternal mingling together of all the elements that constitute a free nationality.

A free nationality, I say ; and I believe that we have yet to come to a new idea of what it is ; of what our own is ; of what every nationality is. It is God's ordinance. Men cannot work out the ends for which they are placed on earth, without being gathered into communities under the protection of government. This national bond is God's ordinance ; and it must have man's respect, reverence, and cherishing affection.

We *are* not—and we *ought* not—to care for England or for France, as we do for our own country. *Here* the God of Nations has set us down ; and drawn about us the bonds of the public order ; and girdled us round with ocean barriers and chains of ocean lakes ; and

spread out this realm of day-dawn and sunset, and healthy climates, and mighty forests, and glorious prairies, long kept and hid from other lands by the waves and storms of the mighty deep—this realm richer than the Hesperides, vaster than Imperial Rome,—to be the empire of a great people.

We love our country. We are proud of it. We know that no nation on earth ever set out on such a career before. It had its *beginnings* in the most advanced civilization in the world; and other good elements have mingled and become blended with it. We love our country. *Let* us love it. Let us be proud of it. I will listen to any high patriotic adjuration, to any solemn admonition; but I will not *listen* to any cold and blighting disparagement. Not only has there been a more rapid growth in wealth and population here, than anywhere else, but more inventions of the subtle intellect have originated here than in any other country; more churches and schools and colleges have been built; more books and newspapers and journals have been printed and read; and more enterprises have been undertaken here, for the reform of morals, for the relief of the poor, and the fallen, and the insane, for the spread of religion at home and abroad. And shall any clique of croakers or fanatics stand before this mighty people and point the finger and say, “Aha! go down! go to pieces! you *are* going down; you are not worthy to live!”

No! wide let patriotic honor and trust and hope beat, from North to South, from East to West; like the mighty ocean waves that engirdle us; like the fresh breezes that sweep through our valleys. For this reason

—for the culture of patriotic sentiments, I am glad to witness that enterprise which is taken up by our whole people, for setting apart and consecrating the residence of the Father of his country, to be his perpetual memorial. I am glad that it is to be done by individual contributions rather than by act of Congress. I am glad that efforts and appeals of every kind, that journals, and speeches, and eloquent orations have gone forth, to stir the national heart.

To gather up, and fix, and perpetuate through all time the great memories of our national life—what place so fit as Mount Vernon! It may be to this country, I will not say what Versailles is to France; for the voluptuous and selfish monarch who built it, stamped upon it quite another character, and did more, in fact, to bring down ruin upon the monarchy than ever was done by any other single action; but it may be what the last king of France desired to make of Versailles, a grand historical monument. The gardens of Versailles, about as large as the estate of Mount Vernon, are laid out with walks through avenues of trees, with many a turn and winding into bowers and boskets, adorned with sheets and falls of water, and filled with fountains. The palace walls are hung with historical pictures of the great men and times of France. Why may not Mount Vernon become in time the more than Versailles of America—its tangled woods cleared up, its barren fields covered with living verdure, and pathways opened all around and through its ample domain, for the generations of all coming time to walk in—drawn thither by attractions of landscape-art, and historic pictures and statuary, and

touched by historic memories surely not less grand and inspiring than those of any people that ever lived.

Yes, and *above* all, let the great name of Washington rise ; of him who did more than any man to make us a people, and whose name more than any man's binds us together ; of him whom the great poets, and orators, and historians of all countries unite to-day, to proclaim the most perfect model of heroic patriotism ; of him who served us without recompense, who governed without ostentation, and whose sway was that of patience, probity, wisdom and modesty ; of him whose imperturbable dignity controlled officers and soldiers alike ; whose natural vehemence was chastened by the solemnity of his mission ; and whose calmest words thrilled the hearts of men like electric fire ; of him who was a tower of strength in the day of our weakness, and a pillar of fire in the darkness and storm ; and who, had an imperial diadem been offered him, in the day of his victory, would not have reluctantly declined it, as Cæsar did, but would have trampled it under foot as a painted bawble ; of him, whom, when he died, a weeping nation declared to be "first in war, first in peace, and first in the hearts of his countrymen."

4

A SERMON,

PREACHED ON THE

NATIONAL FAST DAY,

AT CHURCH GREEN, BOSTON.

BY REV. ORVILLE DEWEY,

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

BOSTON:
TICKNOR & FIELDS.

1861.

4

A SERMON,

PREACHED ON THE

NATIONAL FAST DAY,

AT CHURCH GREEN, BOSTON.

BY REV. ORVILLE DEWEY.

PASTOR OF THE CHURCH.

BOSTON:
TICKNOR & FIELDS.

1861.

Printed by Geo. C. Rand & Avery, 3 Cornhill.

S E R M O N .

TEXT — THE 80TH PSALM.

I SHALL take for my text this morning, the Psalm which I have just read to you. It is applicable to the occasion on which we are met together. Its application here, to-day, is even more striking than it was originally. In this way it was that many a text of the old time was “fulfilled,” — filled fuller of meaning, when applied to the events of a later day. And so it is now.

For here God hath planted a nation, far greater and more prosperous than that of the Hebrews. He has “cast out the heathen, and planted it.” It is by ordinance divine, we believe, — though we do not defend every human action connected with it, — that poor, ignorant, wandering tribes were to give place to a great and civilized people. This North American continent was not meant to be a mere hunting-ground. Not wild native growths were to overrun and occupy it; but the seeds of civilized empire were to be planted here. They *were*

planted ; they grew, — let the toil and pains and sufferings of the early time, let its nurturing blood, tell *how* they grew, — till they took “deep root and filled the land ; till the hills were covered with their shadow, and the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars ; till they sent out their boughs to the sea, and their branches unto the river ;” till, in short, a land a hundred times larger than Palestine, was filled with more than thirty millions of people, all abiding under one grand sovereignty, in such peace, and freedom, and prosperity, and abundance, and rapid progress, as were never seen in the world before.

This planting of a nation, but especially of such a nation, is something sublime and solemn to contemplate. Government of some kind, — without which social order and private security cannot exist, — is certainly the ordinance of God. And, therefore, all mankind have agreed to brand treason as a crime against heaven and earth, and they have stricken it with pains and penalties, with attainders and forfeitures, beyond any other crime against society. But if ever the footsteps of a divine providence have been seen in the growth of any nation, it appears to me that it is in this, our American nationality. If any government ever were, I believe that this is an ordinance of God. And if any treason were ever more inexcusable and monstrous than any other yet seen on earth, I believe it is this which we witness to-day.

And, therefore, without wishing to use opprobrious terms, I cannot but regard the language of the text as applicable to the present painful crisis of our national affairs. "Why hast thou broken down her hedges, so that all they which pass by the way do pluck her? The boar of the wood doth waste it, and the wild beast of the field doth devour it." It is a wild, self-willed, passionate, mad, and reckless invasion of the public order,—this Southern revolt; and if we have any self-respect, any loyalty, any regard for law and lawful rule, we must treat it accordingly. And well may we add the prayer, "Return, we beseech thee, O God of Hosts! look down from heaven, and behold and visit this vine, and the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch which thou madest strong for thyself."

The President of the United States has invited us to assemble ourselves together, to offer such a prayer; and this, not merely as we do every Sunday, but with some special thoughtfulness, humiliation, and sorrow.

On one account, I am well disposed to do so. I do most heartily mourn over this dreadful conflict in which we are engaged with the revolted Departments of the South. I mourn over this awful spectacle of Christian men, who were lately fellow-citizens, embruining their hands in each other's blood. I mourn with those who mourn for the absent, the wounded, and the dead. All

war is horrible, but this to me is the most horrible of all wars.

But, at the same time, I do most heartily respect, approve, and enter into, the feelings of those who have sprung to the support of the government in this great emergency. It is loyalty to law and lawful sovereignty. It is to defend the national integrity and stability and honor, that our people have taken up arms. And yet, I cannot but wonder at the buoyancy and eagerness with which our soldiers go into the fight, — demanding it, and singing, shouting, as they march to the battle-field. I would rather see them on their knees, in prayer, and solemn self-consecration to that awful work. That awful work, I say; and I cannot look upon it in any other light. It is to me the most tragic spectacle under the sun. If our people *must* strike this blow, as I believe they must, yet they should strike with reluctance and sorrow. It is the act of Brutus, slaying his own sons for treason and conspiracy against the state.

It is, perhaps, too much to expect of a *people*, — a whole people, — that it will take up arms altogether in this spirit. We must take men as they are; and few are the men that can fight in pure sorrow for those whom they assail. But so, if possible, *should* men strike for the right. So should they wound and kill their fellows, — in sorrow, though indignation be mingled with their sorrow. So especially should a rebellion be put down,

where the antagonists were lately our fellow-citizens, and may have been our friends. This is a contest, which, whatever passion or frenzy there be on the other side, requires on ours much reflection and cool determination.

If we were resisting foreign invasion, — if we were fighting people of another nation and name than our own, it would be a different thing. But we are fighting our own people. We wound those whom we would fain comfort and heal. We slay those whom we love. I say it, and maintain it. I will not be swept away from this ground by the passions of the hour. I have known many of the Southern people. I have seen them in their homes. I have seen the system of domestic service, by which their homes are supported. But, although I dislike their system, and think it in principle utterly wrong, I do not hate *them*; though I have brought upon myself their displeasure by my plain speaking of slavery, yet I held, and still hold them, in dear esteem for their many virtues. Still, and nevertheless, I oppose them; and I would do so, though they were the dearest friends on earth. Though they were Christians, as holy as the apostles, I would do so; as Paul “withstood Peter to the face;” and for the same reason, — “because they are to be blamed.”

But, though I think them wrong, and to be blamed, and to be resisted, yet is it right, one may say, to resist them in this manner? Since they desired to separate

from us, why should we not have yielded to them, and have said, "Go in peace?" I answer, that to have done so would have been to strike at the roots of all civil government. All lawful sovereignty, all political order, any such thing as nationality, would be impossible upon this principle.

But let us consider first, the question of war in general, and then, the question of this particular war. The sadness and horror I feel at this war, drive me upon considering what place war has in the world, — what place in the providence of God, — what place in the duties of men.

With regard to war in general then, in the first place, or with regard to war abstractly considered, I have been led of late, to ask whether we have not to revise our theories. I never went to the length of some of our Peace Societies; but thus far I went, — I was inclined to admit that war is never justifiable except for self-defence. When invaded, we might fight; but in no other case. Now, however, I doubt whether this limitation can be defended.

In reconsidering the subject I am struck at the outset with this potent fact, — that war seems to have been a part of the normal condition of nations, ever since the beginning of the world; in fact, just as defect, ignorance, mistake, conflict of opinion, is a part of its normal condition. It has been said in one of the discourses called

out by the present crisis,* that probably no man has ever lived to the period of seventy years without encountering this fact of war; and I am inclined to think that the statement might be made still stronger; namely: that no nation has existed forty years without being engaged in some war, external or internal. And there has hardly been a year, or perhaps a moment of time, since the world began, when war has not been going on somewhere. It is computed that more than six thousand millions of the human race have perished in battle, — about seven times the present population of the earth. Now such a fact must be resolved into some kind of consistency with a providential order. The fact stands; it stares us in the face; and it seems to be inevitable. How could it be so, if all war, or all but defensive war, is contrary to the will of God?

Mr. Prudhon, the French writer, in a work lately published, “on War and Peace,” has attempted to legitimate this fact; to show it as incorporated into the very constitution of the world, and as a part of the lawful and ordained condition of men and nations. He maintains that there is “a right of war,” founded on “the right of force;” that is to say, that any nation, deprived by another, or conceiving itself to be deprived, of what is lawfully its own, — a fishery or territory, a fort or arsenal, — has a perfect right to reclaim it by force, and, if

* That of Dr. Ellis, of Charlestown.

necessary, by military force. He maintains that war is a divine thing; an ordinance of heaven, for the adjustment of national claims, not otherwise possible; that the right to use such force lies at the bottom of all nationality, of every political constitution; that the noblest nations are the surest to fight for their rights, and the meanest people to surrender them. And then he goes on to glorify war, as the tribunal of justice, the fountain of honor, the source of progress and improvement among nations, in a strain in which I confess, eloquent as he is, that he is too hard for me.

For I believe that peace is a diviner thing,—which he also seems to admit; I believe that patience and forgiveness are more divine than exaction and force; and that, as the world improves, there will be less war, and, ultimately, none at all; and that nations will yet find a way, by conventions and arbitrations, to settle their disputes without bloodshed, as citizens of the same State now do.

Still, I cannot refuse to see that something of what Mr. Prudhon says, is true. Force does lie at the bottom of all political order; and there are occasions when it must be used, and, in the imperfectness of our present civilization, must be used in war.

And if I go back to the natural and essential condition of humanity, I can come to no other conclusion. Suppose,—I hope you will pardon the homeliness of my illustration for its appositeness,—suppose, I say, that I

and my neighbor are living side by side, in a state of nature, with no common government to appeal to; and he says to me, "This piece of land, this farm on which you live, is mine;" and I reply, "No, it is mine; it was my father's before me; he gave it to me, and it is mine." "Nay," he says, "It is mine;" and he comes on with the strong hand to take possession. What am I to do? Am I to acquiesce? May I not resist him? And if, when I do so, he pulls a stake from the fence, and I another, and they become as spears in our hands,—nay, and if I am beaten down by him, better that I should fall asserting my right, than tamely to yield it to wrong. I should at least have bravely set forth my sense of justice; and I should help, though falling, to spread the sense of justice among my neighbors. But if I did nothing, and all men around me did nothing, in such a case, to vindicate the right, all justice would fall to the ground. And I myself should be despoiled on every hand. One man has taken my land, another would take my house, saying, "*he* will not resist;" another would snatch my purse; and I should be turned out, shelterless, to perish. No, that must not be; that was not meant to be. On the contrary, I believe that God has given me the right to protect my life, my person, and my property, in giving me the power and the instinctive will to do so.

So it is with nations. What sort of a nation would

that be which should form its constitution in this wise? “We think it advisable that we should be one people, and should have a form of government; we hope that all the citizens will respect and obey it;—we wish that no one would steal or rob on the highway, or murder anybody, for we think it is very wrong;—and we desire that other nations will let us alone; that they will never attack our ships or our cities; that nobody will take our forts or arsenals, for we should be very much displeased at it.” No; that might be a constitution for a flock of sheep, but not for a nation of men. No, a mighty *will* lies at the bottom of every nationality; a will to use force to preserve its integrity and to execute its laws; and its language is: We, the king; or, we, the nobles; or, we, the people *ordain* the constitution and the laws; and we will use all necessary force to restrain and punish all crime, and, above all, the crime of treason, *within*; and to resist and overwhelm all invaders of our rights *without*. This latter is war.

And now let it be considered, that justice is not always palpably on one side. Nay, I believe that there is a conscience on both sides, always, at the bottom of every war; for war is not robbery nor piracy, where the marauder knows that he has no right, but a solemn levying of the national force. I do not believe that nations fight but upon the ground that they have the right upon their side. The greatest mystery,—if I sought to find one,—in the

system of Providence, is this difference of opinion, with all its consequences ; and yet I see, that among imperfect beings, it is inevitable ; that it was, in the nature of things, impossible to constitute a race of moral and imperfect beings, without this element of trouble. And the standards of war are the bloody signals lifted up to proclaim and defend opinions. Cousin has somewhere said that every battle is the conflict of ideas ; nay, more, and that the right always gains the victory. This can be true only in one sense, viz : that the moral verdict of the world is always, ultimately, given in favor of the right, even though it sinks in the visible contest. Thus the Three Hundred at Thermopylæ fell ; but the ages have rung with celebration and triumph over that mighty deed. Fallen, sunk in death, they are crowned with immortal victory.

I have said these things upon war in general ; giving only hints instead of descriptions, for which I have no space at present ; and I have said them to show you that war is not always unnecessary ; that all war is not unholy and profane ; that there may be such a thing as a righteous war,—and in such a war I believe we are now engaged. Let us consider it.

Let me speak of this matter in the first place, as between us and the southern people, though I may have nothing in particular to say that is new upon it. But I have often imagined myself, knowing many of them as I

do, to debate this question with them in person, in conversation. I have thought of what they would say, and what I should reply to them.

"You put the blame of this war upon us," they would say; "but it is *not* upon us. We are wronged; we are oppressed; we are fighting for our liberties. We have a right to separate from you. You have made us desire to do so. You have condemned our social system. You have made the relation of fellow-citizens utterly disagreeable to us. Why do you attempt to hold us? Why will you not let us alone? Why will you not let us depart in peace?"

"In *peace*?" I answer, "in *peace*! do you say? Was not your very first step to arm yourselves, and to take your stand in armed defiance to the common Government over us all, to which we had all alike sworn fealty? Your leaders took that fatal initiative, and you followed. It was not we who began the fight, but you. You were long arming yourselves before we ever moved,—as we have found to our cost.

"But wherein were you wronged? What right was denied you? You held your slaves, and had power over them, untouched. Slavery was a municipal institution, with which the General Government did not propose to interfere, and does not now. Is some Northern criticism, grant it were severe at times, a sufficient reason for breaking the national bond? And do you really demand, as the

price of a mere political union with you, that our mouths and minds shall be shut in silence on this subject? It would be greater bondage than any you complain of. We must speak; all the world must speak of it. The fires of criticism are burning all around you; and the South, instead of reasoning or letting others reason, seems 'like scorpion girt with fire,' more likely to destroy itself and its favorite institution together. Yes, 'the institution!' — *this*, disguise it who may, is the cause, at bottom, of the whole difficulty. You are indignant with our opinions about slavery. Only let us of the North say, 'We have changed our mind; you have convinced us that we were wrong; we have come to see that slavery is a just and admirable thing, and are sorry that we opposed it,' and you would be good friends and good fellow-citizens with us to-morrow.

"But, at any rate," they say, "we have a constitutional right to separate." That is the fatal theory, — the other feeling is the impulse, — but that is the fatal theory which supports this whole Southern movement. Not treason, revolt, rebellion, is it, — but secession is the word that covers up all the mischief. John Bell, of Tennessee, is the only man that I have heard of, connected with this movement, that plainly said, "I am going to be a rebel." But he said what is true. For it *is* rebellion. It is just as much rebellion as it would be for Normandy or Burgundy, provinces of France, or for Scotland or Ireland,

parts of Britain, to break off, arm themselves, and bid defiance to their respective governments.

Thus should I argue with the Southern people, or any company of them, if I could meet them face to face. But sorrowful is the arguing which, carried into action, must cost thousands, and perhaps ten thousands, of human lives. I mourn over the necessity by which it is urged. A day of thoughtfulness, humiliation, and grief, is a fit season for it. It is fit that a great people, engaging in such a contest, should bow down before God in prayer and sorrow.

And I do not wonder that the heart of a humane man should sink within him at the prospect of this bloody encounter between the loyal people of America and the revolted States. Nor am I surprised that there are some among ourselves who say, "Let us have peace rather than all this sacrifice of blood and treasure;" who say, "Although the Southern people are in the wrong, yet they think themselves in the right, and it is hard to crush them down, even if we can do so; let us go on with a Northern and Southern republic; there are evils and perils in the plan, but it is better than this fratricidal war." And again, I am not surprised that people abroad, looking as idle spectators upon what is passing in a far-distant country, regard this war as a contest between rival States, — Mexican or South American States; or, at any rate, have come to the conclusion that a revolt which has assumed such immense proportions, should be considered as a suc-

cessful revolution, or as warranting a permanent political division.

Yet I firmly maintain that all these ways of thinking are wrong; here in the house of God, and amidst the solemnities of prayer and humiliation, I firmly maintain that neither the horror of bloodshed, nor brotherly sympathy, nor cold, unsympathizing foreign criticism, are entitled to be our guidance in the awful circumstances in which we are placed.

There is a higher plane of thought, I conceive, than that on which these considerations are placed. Above the mere impulses of humanity and sympathy, I believe, we must rise, if we would rise to the height of this great argument. And we must look farther than our foreign critics do, if we would understand the duty of the hour.

I see, first, a grand question of right, of lawful sovereignty, as between ourselves and the Southern people. There is a right, there is a lawful sovereignty, somewhere in this controversy? Whose is it? Somebody must yield here. Who? Some principles must give way. Which? Loyalty or rebellion? The freedom interest or the slave interest? The right of a majority, or the right of a minority? The conscience of a nation, or of a broken fragment of a nation? The claim, our lawful claim to the national property and domain,—our claim to the national fortresses, arsenals, munitions, and mints; or the claim to

seize and despoil them? Which, I say, shall be surrendered, — supposing that there were an equally strong conviction on both sides? When it is demanded of us that we shall give up what we believe to be the national law and sovereignty, or that we shall suffer the grand fabric of the government to be broken down with impunity, can it in justice be expected of us that we should consent to it? In honor, can we do it, — in conscience, in loyalty, in obedience to any principle of virtue or religion?

Even in a private relation, where I might have a personal right to make any sacrifice I pleased, — yet even then, if a man were to assail me who was only half as strong as I am, — if he were to snatch my purse, and should lift his hand to strike me, could it be expected that I should let him go on and work his will upon me? Would it be thought strange if I should lay my hand upon him, and, using only so much force as was necessary to restrain him, should consign him to the police or to prison? And certainly the plea for forbearance and humanity, — the claim to be “let alone,” — the exclamation that he was very hardly and cruelly dealt with, would be thought, by every bystander, to be a very strange one in his mouth.

And this plea for humanity, it must be remembered, has two sides to it. There are other human beings to be considered, besides those who are engaged in this revolt. If the Southern rebellion could succeed, the slave-trade would

be reopened ; a great slave empire would be built up upon our borders ; it would extend itself over new regions ; and all the misery and injustice of African bondage would be perpetuated, through what period none can tell. In the interest of humanity and of the human race, in a just participation in the recognised duty of all civilized nations, I think we are bound to prevent that, if we can. Not to say that if this slave government could establish itself, and stand side by side with ours, instead of a war of a year or two, we should open the bloody history of endless wars.

To any man among ourselves who dissents from a whole loyal people in this matter, I would say, — what ground *do* you take ? Do you say that secession is right ? Then, doubtless, we are all wrong. Do you admit that it is wrong, — politically, morally wrong, — a false and fatal principle in all government, and without all just cause as against ours ; and then do you say that we are to yield everything that this false and ruinous principle demands of us ? Where is our manhood, if we can do so ? I have heard this called a politician's war. It is utterly false to say so. Opposition to it, rather, is a politician's opposition. It is a nation's war. And we should stand with bent head, — cowed and ashamed before all nations, if we could thus tamely submit to national dismemberment and ruin. We should incur the scorn of the Southern people themselves, and should deserve the taunts which they cast upon our courage and manhood.

Yet, not before our own people alone, but before all nations and all ages, we stand in this dread controversy. I say again that there is a higher plane of thought from which this contest is to be surveyed, than that on which we place an ordinary civil war. The world has far more at stake here than it had in the struggle between the houses of York and Lancaster. That was a war of family interests; this is a war of principles—principles of universal concern. In the breadth and permanence of the interests involved, it is more like the Thirty Years' War in Germany, or that of Holland and the Netherlands with Spain, or that of the French Revolution.

I see here a great government, with a peculiar, a popular, and what is to us a precious title to sovereignty; which the rude hand of rebellion would pluck down, and cover with opprobrium, and blight with failure, before the eyes of all the world. I see a great Republic, seated on the shores of a new world, spreading from the Atlantic to the Pacific sea; built up in the affections of (till lately) thirty millions of people; the pride and hope of its loyal subjects; the resort and refuge of multitudes from the old world; with unexampled prosperity in itself, and dwelling in peace and honor with all nations. And now, for no justifying cause, for an interest in slavery, for the gratification of passions that have sprung from that bitter root, a violent hand is raised to strike at this great image of the public authority, to

break it in pieces, and to scatter it in the dust. And the question is—Shall we permit it? It is truly said that “Democracy is on its trial” in this crisis. *Has* it nurtured in us a faint-heartedness, a recklessness, a love of ease or of property, that is willing to let this mighty fabric go to wreck and ruin? Has it emasculated the noble Saxon race, and made us mere worldlings and cowards? For one, I answer, No. Shall the aristocracies of the old world pass by, wagging their heads in scorn and saying, “Aha! ye could boast of your great Republic, but ye cannot fight for it?” Shall all noble lovers of liberty in the world hang their heads in shame for us and say, “Alas! for our hopes and the hopes of mankind!” And again I answer, No.

And I say no, not in pride or passion, not in any hatred of the South, but under the most solemn sense of duty. To us this is a holy war. Religion—in the highest and widest view of it—commands us to do what we are doing. We have a trust committed to us, as we believe, by the Infinite Authority, and it is in fealty to God, and fidelity to man, that we feel bound to keep it. We cannot yield up lawful sovereignty, the national domain and honor, and the peace and welfare of unborn generations, to the reckless assault that is made upon them. We believe that we should displease the just God, if we did so. We believe that ours is a righteous cause, and, I repeat, a holy war. And if the Southern people say, We, too, have a conscience;

be it so. All men, I suppose, have a conscience of some kind. The question is — Whose is the right conscience? The rebel conscience, or the loyal conscience? They may say, Why cannot you yield to us? We say, Why cannot you yield to us? The question is, Who *ought* to yield? Upon this question we have no doubt. If upon this question there must be an awful and bloody conflict, —if conscience on either side can find no other solution, God pity us! and God defend the right!

